

C. 77.

**Queen's University
Library**

KINGSTON, ONTARIO



PRAYER IN WAR TIME

WORKS BY THE REV.

SIR W. ROBERTSON NICOLL, LL.D.

THE ROUND OF THE CLOCK. With Illustrations by
GEORGE MORROW. 6/-.
SUNDAY EVENING. Fifty-two Sermons for Home
Reading. 2/6 net.

IAN MACLAREN. The Life of the Rev. John Watson,
D.D. With Portrait. FIFTH EDITION. 6/-.
THE CHURCH'S ONE FOUNDATION. Christ and
Recent Criticism. TENTH THOUSAND. 3/6; Purple
leather, 2/6 net; Purple cloth, 2/- net.

THE GARDEN OF NUTS. Mystical Expositions. With
an Essay on Christian Mysticism. SECOND EDITION.
3/6.

THE LAMP OF SACRIFICE. Sermons preached on
Special Occasions. 2/- net.

THE SEVEN WORDS FROM THE CROSS. FIFTH
EDITION. Cloth, 1/- net.

A BOOKMAN'S LETTERS. FIFTH EDITION. Cloth,
4/6 net.

THE DIFFERENCE CHRIST IS MAKING. Cloth,
1/- net.

MY FATHER. An Aberdeenshire Minister, 1812-1891.
With Portraits. SECOND EDITION. 2/- net.

THE LAMB OF GOD. Expositions in the Writings of
St. John. FOURTH EDITION. Purple cloth, 2/- net;
Purple leather, 2/6 net.

THE RETURN TO THE CROSS. NEW EDITION.
Purple cloth, 2/- net; Purple leather, 2/6 net.

TEN MINUTE SERMONS. NEW EDITION. Purple
cloth, 2/- net; Purple leather, 2/6 net.

THE PROBLEM OF EDWIN DROOD. A Study in the
Method of Dickens. SECOND EDITION. Cloth, 3/6 net.

THE KEY OF THE GRAVE. EIGHTH EDITION. 2/6 net.

JAMES MACDONELL. SECOND EDITION. 6/- net.

By **CLAUDIUS CLEAR.**

LETTERS ON LIFE. EIGHTH EDITION. 1/- net.

THE DAY BOOK OF CLAUDIUS CLEAR. THIRD
EDITION. 1/- net.

LONDON: HODDER & STOUGHTON

PRAYER IN WAR TIME

BY

W. ROBERTSON NICOLL

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO

MCMXVI

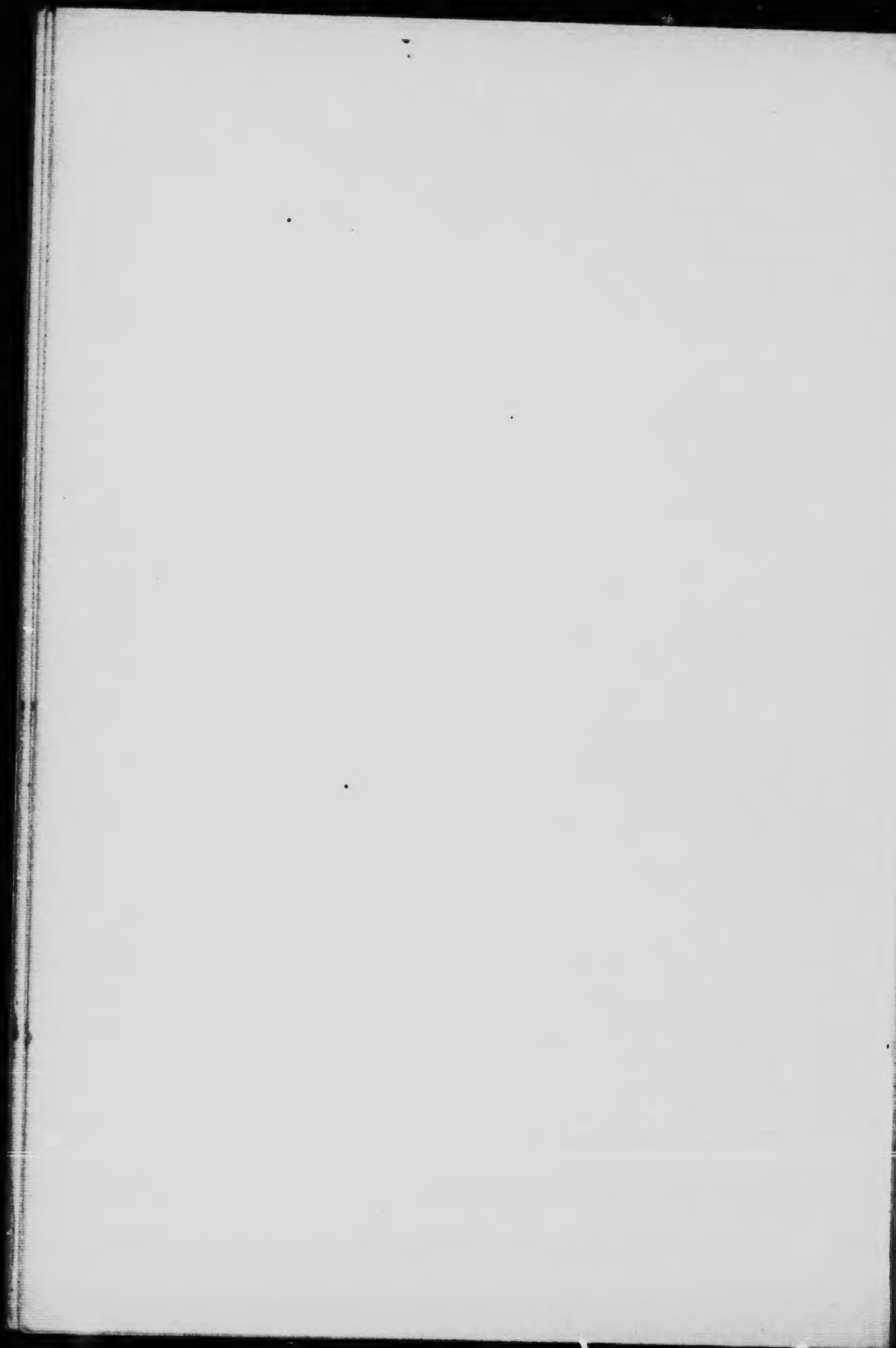
✓
BV210.N6

PREFACE

THE articles which form this volume were published in the *British Weekly* during the War. At the suggestion of many readers they are now sent out in book form. The dates of publication are given for obvious reasons.

BAY TREE LODGE,
HAMPSTEAD,
September 1916.

71178



CONTENTS

I	
PRAYER IN TIME OF WAR	PAGE 3
II	
A CALL FROM THE BATTLEFIELD	15
III	
FIRST RIGHTEOUSNESS—THEN PEACE	25
IV	
'ABIDE WITH US: FOR IT IS TOWARD EVENING'	35
V	
HUMILIATION A PART OF PRAYER	47
VI	
PRAY WITHOUT CEASING	59
VII	
'BUT RATHER GIVING OF THANKS'	71

VIII	
THE HAND OF GOD IN JUDGMENT	PAGE 83
IX	
IMPORTUNATE PRAYER	85
X	
'THE ROCKS ARE NOT BURNING'	107
XI	
TO THE QUIET IN THE LAND	119
XII	
WHEN THE WOUNDED GO HOME	133
XIII	
'THEIR UN-OVERTAKEABLENESS'	145
XIV	
SUSPENSE	153
XV	
ENDURANCE	165
XVI	
THE ACCEPTANCE OF SACRIFICE	177

GE
33

06

07

9

3

5

3

5

7

I

PRAYER IN TIME OF WAR

PRAYER IN TIME OF WAR

Published September 24, 1914

LOVE, it has been said, that needs to be entreated is not perfect love. Perfect love would unseal the deep fountains of mercy and make them flow. But God asks to be entreated. He waits for the cry of His troubled children. He tells them to call upon Him in the day of trouble, and He will give an answer. Yes, those who have never blessed Him in the day of joy are welcome when they call in the day of sorrow. They are not taunted or upbraided, but blessed and pitied.

In this day of trouble many are seeking God who hardly gave Him a place in their thoughts while the sun shone on them. God is the solitary refuge to which the anguished heart can flee. To be driven to God by fear is more ignoble than to be drawn to Him by love, but He makes no distinctions. This, we say, is a time for prayer and supplication and intercession, and the more this spirit grows, the more intense our petitions are; the more frequent our assemblies, the happier is the prospect that this trial will leave the nation spiritually enriched.

Yet we hear from many quarters that there is a sense of perplexity and discouragement in many of our assemblies for prayer. This is, we believe, because the petitions offered are not clear enough, not definite enough, not passionate enough. We may recall at this point a story told by holy SAMUEL MARTIN. A minister had been for some time engaged in prayer, and had been telling God what He was and what He was not, what He had done and what He had not done, till a poor woman rose in the meeting and said, 'Ask Him something; ask Him something.' It is the word of our Blessed LORD, 'Ask, and ye shall receive.' We need to hear the voice of the Mediator saying to us, 'Ask Him something.' We need to hear the voice of the HOLY GHOST saying, 'Ask Him something.' We need to hear the voice of our FATHER saying, 'Ask Me all your hearts' desire, not for yourselves only, but for others, and for all.'

We shall state briefly some of the main considerations on the nature of prayer, and their application to a time like this.

I

In the first place, prayer must be the prayer of faith. We love, ourselves, those who come to us

with a great expectation and a tender confidence, and so does God. But God does not reject the faith that is dim, cloudy, questioning, fearing. The mere fact that we pray to God means that we have faith, though it be only like a mustard seed. Nor is there any limit to the answer given to prayer for pardon and for power against evil. The prayers we offer up are never free from sin, but so long as they are not consciously treacherous or mean or selfish they will be regarded.

What this generation needs above everything is to consider prayer as the bringing of the power of the human will to wrestle with the Divine will. A corrupt mysticism teaches that all true prayer begins with a renunciation of all personal will, that prayer is a sigh of resignation. Prevailing prayer, according to this evil teaching, means a prayer that simply and speedily subsides into God's will and is quiet. But all Scripture and all Christian experience are dead against this view. The will is the central part of our personality, and, as BUSHNELL says, 'God means it to be ennobled and not crushed.' Of course, in the end God's will decides. The mere thought of forcing our will upon God is blasphemous. But, all the same, prevailing prayer means a supplication that has brought a reason for God's hearing

and for giving the thing requested, as otherwise He would not have willed to do. We need not be troubled at the mystery of God's purposes. To quote again from BUSHNELL: 'God's purposes are set by His reasons, as clocks by the sun. He has our prayers as in everlasting counsel before the prayers are made.'

We see then—and it is a message for the hour and for all hours—that prayer succeeds by the intensity of will force put into it. There are those who deny the right of the will to exertion, who condemn it from the outset. But God wants to see our will, to see it in action, to make account of it, and to give it a place in His mind. The Bible from the beginning is full of importunate and prevailing prayers—prayers which prevailed simply because they were importunate. Such was the prayer of ABRAHAM when he pleaded for Sodom. Such was the prayer of JACOB when he wrestled with the angel. Such was the prayer of MOSES when he pleaded to be blotted from God's book if his people were to be blotted. Our LORD frequently commends importunate and unfainting prayer: 'Men ought always to pray and not to faint.' We are to hold on with inflexible tenacity till we know that God says to us, as He sometimes does, 'Speak no more to Me of this matter.' It

is, we fully believe, the want of will in our prayers that so often makes them end in failure. There are many prayers that GOD cannot answer simply because they fail in heroic trust.

II

So far we have written of importunate and definite petitions. What are we to say about the prayer of yearning? Not much. It is impossible, however, to doubt that this form of supplication has power with GOD, and often prevails. There are hearts so cruelly crushed that they are unable to direct themselves to GOD and put into articulate forms the longings that consume them. Their sighs, their griefs, their sorrows, their aspirations are nevertheless known to GOD, Who loves them. These sufferers seem to have no force of will to put into their intercourse with GOD. But the very depth of their feeling, and the very fact that they have done nothing to increase it, but that it has stirred and grown and agonised, witness a most moving sincerity which is not lost, not ignored, not forgotten, not left without an answer. It is written that the HOLY GHOST Himself passes out of the sphere of words when He pleads with groanings that cannot be uttered.

III

We are to pray in the name of CHRIST. It is much that in this way we are less trammelled with the miserable consciousness of our own evil, with the sense of shortcomings and guilt. CHRIST is the answer to this self-condemnation, and He answered it once for all on His Cross. A daring Christian thinker has said frankly that 'In My name' means simply 'In My Cross.' 'Hitherto ye have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.' And indeed it is because we have a High Priest in the holiest place Who once offered Himself without spot to God that we may come boldly to a throne of grace. The Saints of old had prevision of the great Atonement. They were trying to say 'In CHRIST's name' before the time: 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Thy tender mercy blot out my transgressions.' But an infinite and blessed change came over all things when the Son of God passed from the invisible world into the world of time and history. Now we are admitted beyond the scene of the finite into personal communion with the Eternal Son, through Whom all things are made. We stand by His side,

and our heart is with His heart when we ask in His name and receive till our joy is full.

Also when we pray in the name of CHRIST He makes us in a very real and deep sense partners with Himself and His work of intercession. We are prone to think very lightly of intercession. We go into a meeting and offer up certain prayers, and then pass out into the world to forget our pleadings and those for whom we have been pleading. But true intercession lies on the soul day and night. Intercession wades deep as love. When we truly intercede we put the passion of our wills into the prayer, and the names become realities, and we pass as far as we may into the needs and sorrows and struggles of those whose cause we have espoused. The Man of the Cross, the Intercessor on the right hand of the Majesty on high, was called to His work by God, and so are those who share in His intercessory work. They also are called. 'I sought for a man among them that should take up the hedge and stand in the gap before Me.'

IV

We proceed briefly to apply these principles to our present circumstances.

In the first place, it is our business to pray for

victory in the battlefield. Many are leaving our churches and chapels sore at heart because there has been no direct appeal to the Throne of Grace for victory to our arms. We are commanded, or rather invited, in everything to make our requests made known unto God. There is no desire more strong or more righteous among us at the present hour than the desire for victory. And are we not to express that desire and to plead it with all the forces of our will? We believe that we are fighting for freedom, for righteousness, for the defeat of the enemies of the human race. And are we not to pray for these things? Each day comes with a fresh proof that we are at war with Anti-Christ. The destruction of the Rheims Cathedral is a spot on Germany which can never be washed out whilst memory holds her seat. All the centuries to come cannot undo this deed. To commit this sacrilege and defend it is to renounce humanity and to defy God. Most of the forms of prayer that have been published at this time are so limp, so nerveless, so faithless, so cowardly that the mere reading of them depresses. We want no forms of prayer for our Free Churches. What we do want is the proof that those who lead our services are prepared to put before God with solemn pleading the supreme, the

agonising desire that victory should come, and come soon. We say deliberately that it would be far better not to attempt prayer at all than to show such a practical and measureless disbelief in prayer as is involved in the refusal to ask God's blessing in a victory.

We must also pray for our soldiers and our sailors, and pray as far as it is possible for each by name. The Churches have an opportunity such as very rarely comes to them. There is a strange breaking down of the barriers of custom and convention. The nation is drawn together, and is at unity with itself. Let every church and chapel that has sent forth men to fight for us hang a roll of their names within its walls, and plead for them at every meeting. Let us pray that if it be possible they may be spared to come back, though many must die, and let us pray that every death on the battlefield may be a death in grace. But it is lawful and it is right to pray that their lives may be spared. Indeed, this is almost the only prayer which many a one can make. There has been little sunshine in the house since the dearest went away, and there is a burden which weighs like lead upon the lonely heart. Let this lonely heart be comforted and cheered by the thought that others are praying for those

of whom they keep thinking all the day and night. The intercession we have asked for will seek out every home from which one has gone and do its utmost to comfort, to strengthen, to relieve. We are confident that our people will see to it that those left in poverty by the absence of the breadwinner shall not suffer from want. But there is a trouble much harder to bear than that, and in that trouble also the sufferers must be helped. And they will mainly be helped by intercession. The great matters of life and death and eternity are before the national mind as they never were before. Woe unto us if we are deaf or disobedient to the calls that are ringing in our ears. Let those who are hazarding their lives for our safety and peace have the comfort of knowing that their dear ones are guarded and beloved, and that they themselves are never forgotten where the people of God assemble.

Next we must pray for our enemies also, remembering that the first cry of the Immaculate Lamb from the Altar was, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'

II

A CALL FROM THE BATTLEFIELD

A CALL FROM THE BATTLEFIELD

*Address delivered at the City Temple Intercessory Service
on October 23, 1914*

'Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.'—H. AREWS
xiii. 18, 19.

I BRING you to-day a message from those who are fighting for us on land and on sea. They are saying to us in the homeland, 'Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.'

I

They have a right to our prayers, for they have the right to claim a good conscience and a willingness to live honestly in all things. They have 'a good conscience,' for they have hazarded all in the cause of righteousness and peace. We have too much forgotten that in the last resort we are entirely and wholly dependent on our soldiers and sailors—especially on those who have the almost unbearable responsibility of leading them. We have wisdom and counsel, we have might and

money and great resources, and with these we can back our brave men in the critical struggle. But without them we are helpless, and all that we possess and all that we do will not bring us to our goal. How precious, then, and how near our hearts, must those be who are facing the actual and awful realities of war !

They have a good conscience, for they are doing all that men can do for the honour, the safety, and peace of our Empire and our civilisation. It is they who stand between our women and children—between them and death, or worse than death. They have removed themselves beyond all challenge, for they have withheld nothing. It is we men who remain at home and refrain from actual intervention in the fight who are on our defence. It is we who have to answer to our conscience, to our country, and to our God, that we are out of the zone of fire, and are in the enjoyment of our homes. There are, of course, very many who have a good answer to the challenge. They are debarred by age or physical weakness from taking their place in the ranks. The day may come, however, when even they may have to do the little they can. There are no doubt very many who ought to have obeyed the summons, who have the qualifications, and who for various

A CALL FROM THE BATTLEFIELD 17

reasons are holding back. We may hope that as the conflict goes on they may see the path more plainly. It is as certain as it can be that multitudes are not of good conscience in this matter. But we who are not reckoned among the fit must do what we can for those who are. We cannot make our absence good. We cannot sacrifice what those in the fight are sacrificing. How glorious is the record of men who have offered themselves willingly in all ranks of life! How many who were rich in possessions, in love, in youth, in hope, with life opening sunnily before them, have quietly given their lives, unboasting and unfearing! How many have met death without a murmur or a pang! How meekly and how devoutly have their stricken ones taken up life afresh, as those who were sure of a meeting! Have they not a right to ask for our prayers?

They have been in all things 'willing to live honestly.' We have many stories of our soldiers and sailors, and they all testify to their gaiety, their courage, their kindness. They have smiled in the face of death. They have grown brighter and better tempered and keener under the harshest conditions. War is war, but they have done what they could in mercy and in pity. Not one case of outrage or needless cruelty has been

made good against any soldier of our British troops. We thrill with pride when we think of them—of what they are, and of what they have done, and what they are doing.

II

What can we do for our soldiers and sailors? Many things; but not the least thing is to pray for them. What do we mean by prayer? Do we mean by prayer a simple, hopeless out-breathing, dying away in false and feeble resignation? The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews took no such view of prayer. Perhaps his was the most subtle and beautiful mind among all the inspired writers of the New Testament. He unquestionably regarded prayer as a power. 'I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.' Our soldiers and sailors, in their long days and nights, go on cheerily with their work, but who among them does not long to be back, crowned with victory, and in the arms of his own? Pray for that. Pray as those who believe that your prayer may make a difference. There is such a thing as the suppliant almightiness of prayer. God does not mean our prayers to be mere sighs of acquiescence. He loves to be entreated, pleaded with, wrestled

with. He does not wish to break our wills, but to make them. We are to put will into our prayers. 'Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.' What I mean is that we should pray with all our might for a speedy victory. Is there one of us who does not long for it? Is it conceivable there should be a single human being in this city or in this land who would, if he could, prolong this war by a single day? I cannot believe it. Well, then, if we desire this we must pray for it. If we are not ready to pray for it we have no right to desire it. But we desire it, and we pray for it, and we pray as those who believe that it is not the same thing to God and man whether we pray or no.

'That I may be restored to you the sooner.' The day of the return of our victorious fighters—oh, what a day that day will be! I never longed so much to live for anything as to live to that day. Oh, the rapture and the rest and the thankfulness and the gladness that will fill every heart when again there is peace on earth—a righteous peace! They will not all come back, and many of us will have to go through our Gethsemane—a fierce conflict, a submission, a strengthening angel. But still, they will return, the vast

majority of them, crowned, as we believe, with glory.

Well, then, let us pray for it with the whole intensity of our hearts. Oh, if we only believed that our prayers would bring them back sooner—if London believed it, if the Churches believed it—instead of having hundreds present this day we should have had thousands, and no place in London would be able to contain the pleaders. But there are many of us who do really believe it. Let us go on with our praying, and make it, if we can, more earnest every day. There is prayer all over the world. There is prayer on sea and land. Every soldier in the trenches puts up his prayer at night. A recent visitor to Russia wrote home, 'I have come here to see a nation on its knees.' Our country is not yet on its knees. When it is we shall see the light break.

III

An American writer has said that what we want to see most of all is good pray-ers. It seems as if there were not many left to us. Perhaps the throng and fever of our modern days incapacitates men and women for that continual siege of heaven which is involved in true prayer. It is hard to concentrate one's

A CALL FROM THE BATTLEFIELD 21

energy on prayer and to obey the commandment, 'Pray without ceasing.' But it is not impossible. If we pray for our soldiers and sailors the last thing each night, if we do so as soon as we waken, if from time to time during the day we lift up our hearts in CHRIST's name, then perhaps, by and by, even as the days are saturated with thought about the War, they will be saturated with prayer about the War. When we have prayed enough the War will end. But let us who believe in prayer see to it that it is not prolonged by our neglect.

And so I give you again the message from those who are fighting for us on land and sea, 'Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.'

III

**FIRST RIGHTEOUSNESS—THEN
PEACE**

FIRST RIGHTEOUSNESS—THEN PEACE

*Address delivered at the City Temple Intercessory Service
on October 30, 1914*

‘First being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace.’—
HEBREWS vii. 2.

WE hated war with a steadily growing hatred and abhorrence. We hate it more than ever, and look with longing for its end. A great and powerful movement for peace was at work in the world, and has not been defeated though it has been stayed. But we never said that all wars were to be condemned. We knew too well that huge armaments were being piled up. We became familiar with the language of menace and hate. We had to say, ‘I am for peace, but when I speak they are for war.’ At last the storm burst upon us, and found us but partially prepared, while the enemy had prepared by all means—fair and foul. When the time came we calmly took our side. Never in any previous war was the nation so united and so steadfast. We had not renounced our quest for peace, but we saw that something

came before that. That something was righteousness. Our LORD JESUS CHRIST is first King of Righteousness, and then King of Peace.

I

First, righteousness. Had it not been for that we might have had a kind of peace. It would not have lasted long unless we had become so craven as to fear a fight in any cause. It would have been a selfish, ignoble, and cowardly peace, bought at the price of open and cynical treachery. We might have renounced our plighted word, our honour, our obligations. We might have torn up the scrap of paper and left little Belgium to her fate. But it could not be. It would have been a peace which would have made us the scorn of the whole world, and left us without a friend. Such perfidy and such ignominy would have been many times worse than war.

While the battles rage our hearts are often anxious and heavy. They will be for months to come. We shall have bitter news as well as joyful news. Our endurance and our faith will be tested to the uttermost. Consider how much more wretched we should have been if we had been out of this war, if we had been watching the ruin of our Allies and remained passive. Better war, we

FIRST RIGHTEOUSNESS—THEN PEACE 27

say from our hearts, than the tame acquiescence in the claim of the German militarism to dominate the world.

But JESUS is first King of Righteousness. Is this an antiquated phrase covering a dead thought? Nay, verily it is the spring of life's hope and of its highest joy. Righteousness is the keyword of Christianity. It is the granite foundation of our faith. The idea of righteousness is not a simple rudiment of the spiritual schools. Whoever understands ST. PAUL's intense conception of righteousness knows that it was the secret spring of the Apostle's spiritual power. To him the Gospel was primarily a declaration of the righteousness of GOD. Even love took second place to righteousness. This idea was given from above, it was not evolved from the inner consciousness, or from a survey of the world's history. The whole course of revelation is the gradual unveiling of the righteous GOD, which reaches its end in the New Testament. Once we know what righteousness meant to the Apostles we have not much more to learn.

I agree with the eminent preacher who said that if we as a nation had never known CHRIST we should have been at peace. It is CHRIST Who has flung His shield over the weak things of the

world. The love of liberty, the abhorrence of tyranny, the care for the rights of other nations, the sacred obligations of honour, would have had no power to move us to battle had it not been for the spirit of CHRIST within us. The devil would have advised us to be neutral. He would have whispered to us that nothing was to be put in comparison with our own comfort and prosperity and security. He would have advised us to be content with our little island, and to obey the behests of our masters, and to cast to the wind the old superstitions about justice and mercy and courage and faith. No, it is because we are Christians that we have gone to war. It is CHRIST Himself who has bidden us draw the sword for the cause of righteousness.

II

First righteousness, and then peace—by which I mean a righteous peace. There is no other peace worth striving for, no other peace in which men can be happy. Is it possible for us to hope that as a result of this frightful war such a peace may come to us? There are many who are comforting themselves during this agony by the thought that this war will mean the end of wars. There are others, less sanguine, who say that

FIRST RIGHTEOUSNESS—THEN PEACE 29

as long as sin remains war will remain. To get rid of war we must first get rid of the evil that is in men's hearts. I cannot help thinking that we may look forward hopefully to the end of war if a righteous peace is reached. I decline to accept war as the permanent condition of human society. Slavery has been all but banished from the world, and may not war be banished? When we come to the end of the weary strife we shall see many things in a new light. We shall see, as we do not see even now, the horror, the pity, the futility, the ruin and the waste, which follow in the track of war. I would fain hope that, when the course of this world war is calmly surveyed, the appeal to the arbitrament of war will cease. We cannot look forward very far, but surely we may expect that at the end the victors will see to it that, as far as it is possible, war and the menace of war shall be removed from the terrors of human life. It is for this that we are fighting, and save this we can look for little as the result of our costly sacrifice.

But if the fight goes against us there is no such hope. Imagine—if you can imagine—a triumphant Germany. Imagine—if you can imagine—Britain, France, Russia, India, Canada, Australia, Japan, all the subdued and obedient

vassals of the German conqueror. Would this make an end of war? Does any one believe that such a triumph would be more than the triumph of an hour? Only by the sheer wholesale murder of all free men could such a settlement be made permanent. Such an end would be no end. So long as any Briton could lift his arm there would be conspiracies first and battles next, and soon the flames would be burning over the whole earth. There is no peace in that, neither is there a true peace if we merely beat Germany on the land and on the sea. It has been well said that we should be conquerors in that case, but we shall be more than conquerors if we can exorcise the demon of militarism from the German mind and soul, for Germany in her humiliation will learn to take her true place among the fellowship of the nations. Our hope, however, for the true peace that is built upon righteousness is in the triumph of the KING OF SALEM, who was first of all King of Righteousness—Who is made of God to all His people wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. When the lightnings flash from one end of heaven to the other, and He returns to the world again, He will take to Himself His great power and reign, and then will come a peace never to be broken

FIRST RIGHTEOUSNESS—THEN PEACE 31

more. There is much in the New Testament to suggest that He will come through the ragings and convulsions and earthquakes of the world. As CHARLES WESLEY wrote, in those lines which CHARLOTTE BRONTË has quoted :—

‘ Oh ! who can explain
This struggle for life,
This travail and pain,
This trembling and strife ?
Plague, earthquake and famine,
And tumult of war,
The wonderful coming
Of Jesus declare.’

He will come again to this old, weary, blood-drenched earth, and then will be the reign of peace. Then will all the wild tumult be laid to rest, and instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree, and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

IV

**'ABIDE WITH US: FOR IT IS
TOWARD EVENING'**

'ABIDE WITH US: FOR IT IS TOWARD EVENING'

Published May 4, 1916

THE risen LORD, after His precious and victorious Passion, after He had broken the bars of death, went with two disciples from Jerusalem to Emmaus. 'And they drew nigh unto the village whither they went: and He made as though He would have gone farther. But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them.'

If we consider the passage carefully we shall see that the prayer of the disciples, 'Abide with us, for it is toward evening,' is generally misinterpreted. This misinterpretation pervades one cherished and beautiful hymn familiar to the Christian Church. The hymn takes their request as meaning that they, for their sakes, as the day was darkling, pleaded for the company of Him Who had mastered the terrors of the night. But when we look at the verses we see that it was of His plight and not of their own that they were thinking. He was, so far as they knew, without

shelter, and their hearts, still burning with the words He had spoken to them by the way, went out to Him in a rush of sympathy and compassion. They asked Him to abide under their humble roof and to partake with them of their simple fare, because He had demeaned Himself as He had done, because of a kind and human feeling.

Nevertheless, there is truth in the common understanding of the petition, for whenever CHRIST becomes the guest He becomes the host. Be sure that they found it so. Thus we may linger a little on the prayer that has gone up through all the generations from many a believer who knows the CHRIST more truly than they did. They did not know fully that this Man was a refuge from the wind, a cover from the tempest. They did not know that the wind and the storm had driven pitilessly upon Him. They were walking at best in twilight, waiting, wondering, wis'ful, praying even when it seemed that they were utterly unheard. New glories were to break upon them. They were to discover that their guest was to be their host indeed, that He would in the end take them to abide with Him in the true courts of the House of God.

I

'Abide with us, for it is toward evening.' It is especially a prayer for those who are old and for those who are growing old. The evening of life is often a time of gloom and chill and loneliness. It is the very grey November month of the year. The long struggle of life has brought low the suppliant's strength. Broken by weariness, weakened by illness, weighted with sorrow, and crushed with care, the heart longs for the Presence that will not pass; for the Strength that is made perfect when the vigour of nature fails; for the Love that makes up for the many loves that are missing—for a while.

Never, perhaps, in the history of the world was this prayer faltered out more earnestly. A high sensitiveness which our so-called civilisation has developed makes the horrors of war even more terrible than they used to be. When it is toward evening with us we have little hope of living till a brighter day dawns. All trouble is the shadow of death. It reminds us of it. It is like it. And it helps to bring us toward it. Such security as had been painfully built up against certain ills vanishes away. The provision made for a few quiet years at the end is being poured into a

bottomless gulf. So there are many in the evening of their lives who are perplexed on every side. They have to live through fightings without and fears within, and they have to watch day by day the gradual dimming and quenching of hopes they hardly wish to survive. They cannot control the wild forces that have broken loose in the world, and they do not understand how they can be controlled. The world is too much for them. They are assailed by evil tidings, and every day brings its own share. What then! Are the people of God forsaken? Nay, verily, for CHRIST abides with them, and it will be enough for us if we have the sense of His fellowship. He is able, if He cannot as yet dry all our tears, to keep us fighting the good fight of faith and laying hold of eternal life. And this is all we ask.

II

But, of course, the first meaning of the prayer was different. The disciples were asking Him to abide with them because it was evening to Him. It was evening to them, but it did not matter, for they were at home. He was in worse case, for He was a stranger, and they never dreamed of the resources that were in His power.

So the lesson for us is that we must make room

for CHRIST. He spent His life in this world seeking room and being denied it. When He dignified and consented to be born there was no room for Him in the inn. When He was wearily seeking us He was not always sure of a roof to cover Him, for He said, 'Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.' He came unto His own and His own received Him not. It was never His manner to force His company on any. He made as though He would have gone farther, and if the disciples had not asked Him to stay He would have sheltered Himself—who can tell where? In the bosom of God? He still says, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock.' There is a lesson for us, most pregnant and most vital, in this tremendous crisis. It is that we who trust Him, we who worship Him, should see that He has room in our counsels and in our plans, that we should plead for His fellowship, that we should submit ourselves to His counsels, that we should take all our cares and all our perplexities and spread them before the LORD. It is for us, in the midst of a faithless and perverse generation, to testify that the truths we have preached are not dreams, that we know Whom we have believed and what we have taken

in hand, and that we are confident that He Who has begun a good work in us will carry it on to the day of the LORD JESUS.

We are very far from pretending to read the mysteries of Providence, or the precise meaning of the world-situation. But two things are certain.

1. Is it not true that before the war we were losing CHRIST out of our national life? A steady drift was carrying us away from our true goal. We were forgetting GOD, and what that means we are beginning to understand. Christian had his fight with Apollyon in a narrow passage in a place just beyond *Forgetful Green*. 'And indeed,' says he, 'that is the most dangerous place in all these parts.' Christian ministers have been finding their work more and more difficult every year. The attendance at places of worship, and even the numbers of Sunday school children, were showing over all a steady decline. The contempt for the LORD's Day seemed to spread. Professing Christians in eminent positions were to be seen on Sundays on the golf course. We do not seek to apportion blame, and we do not forget for a moment the staunchness and fidelity of many Christians. But still, it remains true that ideals were waning. A quiet atheism was

the temper of the times in many circles. There were portents of monstrous growth. The very foundation truths of morality were ridiculed by a cynicism as putrid, profane, and heartless as any that has ever appeared in the world. Certain who have the ear of the public seemed to delight in making sport of the sweetest certainties. There was a devouring passion for luxury and amusement. Social reformers were almost hopeless as they witnessed the pre-occupation of the young with games. They were not laying games, but watching others play them. On the part of the privileged there was a passionate resistance to any limitation. The vast teeming populations were almost hopelessly divided, and were able in consequence to make little headway. But they were seething with discontent, and it looked sometimes as if our society would be torn in pieces by civil strife. A very acute observer of our time says that the great characteristic of the last ten or twenty years was restlessness. We did not find and we did not seek true rest. All this means that CHRIST was knocking at the door in vain, as of old.

2. Can we say that a generation which was going amain to hell has been set round again towards heaven? Are there any signs that we

are really calling CHRIST back to our hearts again ?

We vehemently wish that we could say so. But there are not many reassuring signs, though there are some. We believe that there is a great intensity of private prayer. We believe that in many quiet places disciples gather together and pour out their hearts before GOD. But in many churches the attendance at intercession meetings is most disappointing. We would not bring a railing accusation against ministers, for we believe the great majority of them are doing their best. But there is not that urgency and intensity of prayer that we need to see before we can be very hopeful. Nor is there the spirit of humiliation which befits us in our present state. Say what we will, the sins of the nation have been great, and it may well be, as SIR DAVID BEATTY has said, that we shall not begin to gain victory till we are brought to our knees in supplication. If it were possible to see a great turning of the heart of the nation towards GOD, we might be reconciled to much and look with the greatest happiness to a better world in the future. It is with GOD that we have to do. We may multiply our munitions and our soldiers. We may call in new counsellors and leaders, and yet nothing will

avail us if we leave CHRIST out. He is the Captain of our salvation. It is under Him that we must attain victory. He must be at the head of our ranks to lead us. Are we thus led forward? Are we thus led on?

There have certainly been some things to make us very thankful. Dr. JACKS says in a thoughtful essay that the war has brought to England a peace of mind such as she has not possessed for generations. He thinks that the mind of the nation is much calmer than it was before the war. Bereavement, the cruel anxieties, the immense miseries, the grave uncertainties of the future, strike hard. But those are calmest who are making the greatest exertion and facing the greatest sacrifices for the common cause. They say that there is something to live for now. The soldiers and sailors are blithe and brave. The nation as a whole is taking very quietly the prodigal expenditure of money, and the destruction of the huge accumulations of which it boasted itself. The money could not be better spent than in preserving the cause of liberty and of righteousness.

Still, we need something more. We need the constant reference of all our ways and words and

works to GOD as revealed in CHRIST. Dr. JACKS points out, very rightly, that the destruction of militarism will not save us. If militarism were cast out then there would be a huge accession to industrialism, and a fiercer conflict than ever for the money produced by this industrialism. The wealthiest country in the world and the least menaced by foreign war, where all classes have the largest share of this world's goods, is America. And is America at peace? No, we want something more. We cannot live without CHRIST. If Christianity were to die out of the world, every evil that affrights us would start up in strength enormously increased. There is no hope for us except in humiliation and prayer and faith. Come, let us return to the LORD!

V

HUMILIATION A PART OF PRAYER

HUMILIATION A PART OF PRAYER

Published May 18, 1916

WE have read strange objections to the appointment of a Day of Humiliation and Prayer. It has been urged that, while prayer is an undoubted privilege and duty, we have no need to humiliate ourselves. We have, it is said, been forced into this war; it is a righteous war; we have fought it bravely; it is for the aggressors to humiliate themselves, and not for us.

Now, while we have believed, and do believe as intensely as any, that this conflict was forced upon us, and that we could not in honour evade it, and must continue it with our whole strength till the goal is attained, we also believe that we have much for which to be proud and thankful. We believe also that there is much for which our portion is shame and confusion of face. But the central fact is that there can be no prayer without humiliation. Humility, it has been said, is the best friend of prayer. We may go further, and say that without humility and the lowly expression of humility there is no prayer. There is no true prayer that does not include and rest

upon a prayer for pardon, and that prayer must be offered to his latest hour on earth by the holiest believer in the world.

I

Let us consider what prayer is. True prayer realises the truth about man and GOD. It is not tied to form, although forms may be very helpful. It is not tied to places, though most believers find that one place helps them to pour out their hearts. It is not even a matter of words. Perhaps the deepest of all supplications are wordless. It is above all things a matter of manifest sincerity and earnestness. It is not tied to any particular mood of the spirit. We are happy if we can go forward to our prayers in the name of CHRIST with a brave and believing heart. But it often happens that this is the very heart we need to pray for, when our courage has sunk and our eyes are dim and our voices are broken. We can without words tell our case to the LORD Who hears us. When all the map of our poor history is spread before the Eyes that pity us it will include our sins, our failures, our sorrows, our hopes, our joys, our fears, and our bitter woes. If this be true, then certainly the avowal of sins, past and present, will include a great part of the supplica-

HUMILIATION A PART OF PRAYER 49

tion. Sometimes when the recital is complete there may be but one prayer to follow it, and that prayer will be, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner.' There are prayers for high days and holidays and for nameless exaltations of the spirit, but the everyday prayer is the prayer of the publican.

How can it be otherwise? A Puritan divine has said that the man who pleads his own merit does not pray, but simply demands his due. In effect he says to God, 'Pay me that Thou owest.' If that prayer is answered we know what the answer will be. We do not pray at all until we pray as penitents. Prayer is never so effectual as when the heart is broken and contrite. There never is truer prayer than the prayer which is salt with penitential tears. Such prayer God will not despise. When the heart breaks with repentance it often breaks the bars that shut us from life and peace, and the whole being becomes a prayer. When we feel that the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint, and that there is but a step between us and death and nothing left for us but to plead the Precious Blood, then we have effectually pleaded. For none but the guilty ever understand the magnificent charity of God.

There is no true and prevailing prayer that does

not recognise that to sin against God is the true and damning treason. We may sin, we have sinned, all of us, foully, against our neighbours, and God forbid that we should make light of such transgression. But to sin against our neighbours is sin against fellow-subjects of the King, and it is sin against the King that is on the very essence of sin. How, then, talk of disjoining humiliation and prayer? We repeat that humiliation is the essence and the groundwork of all prayer in the name of the Redeemer.

II

Since, then, confession of sins is part of the very life of prayer, it becomes us earnestly to strive after true devotion and reality in our penitence. It may well be feared that we often offer the petition, 'Forgive us our trespasses,' without any adequate or sincere realisation of what transgression means and of what pardon means. In view of days of humiliation it is well that we should be frank with ourselves. Confession is nothing unless it is sincere, deliberate, and offered up with the full consent of the heart and mind. We see dangers in this respect.

In the first place, there is a terrible danger of our confessing with great unction what we are

HUMILIATION A PART OF PRAYER : 51

ceased to consider the sins of others. Who does not know it? There are Christians in opposite camps who judge each other very uncharitably. At a time like this they are prone to say that their opponents are being chastised, and the nation is being chastised, for certain sins of which they themselves are free. We will not give specific instances, but every one can supply them for himself. There is a very mischievous phrase of false theology, namely the phrase, 'vicarious punishment.' There can be no such thing as vicarious penitence. It is our own sins that we must confess and deplore. Part of the sins may be that we have tamely and guiltily acquiesced in the continuance of temptations which have wrought havoc in the land. No doubt that is true. But this acquiescence is part of our own sin, and it is for us to confess it and deplore it and purify our guilt before God. Oh, how excellently ready we are to see and to acknowledge the sins of other people! How reluctant we are to scrutinise our own breasts! How keenly we can criticise our fellow-mortals, and how slow we are to see our own manifold and grievous errors! The true humiliation before God is the humiliation of every member apart, of every family apart. We are one. The mysterious solidarity of human

life makes us in a sense responsible for the sins of the body. Let us take our failure to bear this responsibility as part of our own iniquity, and let us confess it and humble ourselves before God because of it. But we are not called upon to repent, nor is it possible for us to repent, sins in which we have no share.

Further, it is necessary to say with great frankness that our confession will be utterly insincere, and therefore profitless, if we tell falsehoods against ourselves. There is a kind of abject indiscriminating humility which has no truth behind it, and which passes easily into the grossest and most loathsome hypocrisy. More than one of our great secular writers has held up this humility to a deserved scorn. Again, we say, let us be real in our confessions and confess nothing for which we are not responsible, and of which we have judged sincerely. We must be like the Psalmist, who humbled himself before God, but would not plead guilty to the false charges of men. 'Mine enemies speak evil of me,' he says, but he says also that he has not done that which they charge against him. So far as their charges are concerned he is innocent and pure. We do right to defend ourselves, if need be, against slanders. We have enough to answer for, God

knows, without adding to the list of our falls. In our present circumstances, for example, we are not free to admit that we desired war, or that we intentionally provoked war, or that we cherished enmity to our foes. We did none of these things. There are enemies who bring such charges against us, but they are false charges. We repudiate them, while at the same time we humble ourselves in penitence over the charges which our own hearts make against us.

III

We propose to return to this subject, for we are very deeply convinced that if we are to emerge victorious from our ordeal, if we are to see an end of this horrible anarchy, we must far more seriously as a nation and as individuals give ourselves to prayer. Prayers win great battles. He who prays well, fights well. It is the impressive and reiterated teaching of Scripture that asking is the law of the Kingdom. Without asking we can accomplish nothing. The rule is not relaxed even for the Heir of all things. To the Son He saith, 'Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance and the uttermost part of the earth for Thy possession.' We, too, must ask, and we must go on asking. It is

perseverance that is crowned. There are so many things to pray for, so many things to ask for ourselves and others. The Son accepted the law and asked, and we must arm ourselves with the same mind if we are to be victorious. We ask for victory, and we do not ask with bated breath. Anything that concerns the kingdom of CHRIST and the glory of GOD we may pray for, and we may be sure that in GOD's good time it will come. After each petition in the LORD's Prayer we do not need to say, 'Not my will, but Thine be done.' We ask for victory, the victory for justice, the victory for freedom, the victory for humanity. That will come, for GOD is behind the fighters in that cause. But whether He will accomplish this victory by means of us who are fighting is another thing. If we do not ask, if we are careless and prayerless, it may please Him to cast us off for our unworthiness and to win His victory through others. We must, as the awful drama unfolds itself, betake ourselves more and more to prayer. If we do we shall see the morning light of salvation. CHRIST will break forth upon us all at once in His holiness and love. But before that can be we must take Him into our life and every incident of our life. As one has said, 'Before every action we must breathe a prayer,

HUMILIATION A PART OF PRAYER 55

and during every action we must breathe a prayer, and after every action we must breathe a prayer.' But how far we are from this ! How hard may be the discipline through which the loving Father must lead us ere the end is reached. The very beginning of our hope is in humiliation before God. Thus shall we come to know ourselves. But how many bands must be snapped ere we are free indeed !

VI

PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

Published June 15, 1916

A WELL-KNOWN scholar, writing of the great decrease in congregations at intercession services, says: 'That rush has long ago ceased, and of those who persevere how many are really deprecating on behalf of some loved ones the vengeance of a GOD of wrath! How many still pray to a GOD of Love, but do so in doubt rather than in trust!' A clergyman replies that his experience shows him that it is those whose prayers were little more than an effort to avert ill-luck who have fallen off. 'Among those who have remained, be they many or few, the most superficial observer can hardly help noticing a great deepening of real spirituality and power.'

We know how easy it is to take dark views of this subject. We remind ourselves that there are apparently but few who believe in prayer and practise it. When there is talk of a day of humiliation and prayer there are many Christians who say that there will be no general prayer. They tell us that there are very many who think that prayer is of no use. There are those who

believe that prayer has no effect on any one but the offerer. A defiant or a careless silence, they say, will seal millions of lips. Also, they tell us that not a tenth of those who repeat prayers will offer them in faith, and that there will be very little of that sincere and frank confession which is an essential part of prayer.

However this may be, the duty of believers remains clear. To them it is written, '*Ye shall ask.*' Whatever other people do or fail to do, '*ye shall ask.*' If others fail *ye* shall continue. '*Ye shall ask.*' If others will neither ask nor seek nor knock, *ye* shall do so. The one hope for a country lies in the true believers who dwell therein, and, be they many or few, these believers will pray and, if it please God, save their fellows. The intercessors left to us will prevail. They will not be confused by sophisms about the laws of nature, and miracles, and the divine decrees. They will give heed to the inward and outward voices that summon them to the throne of grace. The faith that has overhung and surrounded their souls as a dwelling and a refuge will not be pulled to pieces. For our own part, we believe that there is more prayer in the land and on the field than ever there was in the history of the world. It is sorely needed, and we should hasten the end

of this weary and awful strife if we reinforced it. We need men and women who will pray, and we are finding them.

Now that we are in this pass we need the masters in the love of God, and we need also the frailest, the humblest, the most ignorant. An American writer has said that the supreme necessity of the Church and the world is a company of great Pray-ers. It is true. But we want, in addition to the great Pray-ers, those who have just begun, who stammer at their first attempt, who can hardly, if at all, find words in which to express the yearning that fills their souls. To the ranks of Pray-ers there have been added many who never prayed before, and who are now in the face of danger, of death, of bereavement. No matter how broken their supplication has been, it has been noted and announced on high—'Behold, he prayeth.' Well may we study the commandment, 'Pray without ceasing,' at this time when everything often seems to be sinking from under us, and our sweetest cups are full of bitterness.

I

There are, first, the great and prolonged wrestlings with God in desperate circumstances. We do not believe that many Christians pass through

life without one experience at least parallel with that of JACOB's wrestling with the Angel of the Great Counsel. We might reverently think also of Gethsemane and our LORD's great Agony there. But there are shadows in Gethsemane which will never pass away from mortal eyes. We shall never know, as CHRIST did, what it is to be afflicted with all the waves of GOD. Let us rather, then, think of JACOB, a man of like passions with ourselves. JACOB was left alone, and there wrestled a man with him until the break of the day. This is written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. In such wrestlings the heart must be alone, and the world must be in night. 'Tell me, I pray Thee, Thy name,' was the pleading of the suppliant. And He said, 'Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after My name?' Wherefore did he ask? Because for him and those who come after him, there comes an hour when the mystery, hid from ages and generations, must lift a little. The answer comes, but it never leaves the man again as he was. From that time forward JACOB halted. All believers halt after such experiences. There must be some new crucifixion of the flesh and its affections and lusts. That crucifixion will leave its scars on the body and on the soul. There must be another halting

—a halting before temptation. The victorious wrestler must no longer be caught by the lures of the world. They must lose their power to interest, to excite desire, to exact compliance. Notwithstanding, 'I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me.' This is the spirit in which such struggles must be continued and ended. We must go on till we have obtained the blessing, let the time be never so long, let the night be never so dark.

II

There are great believers who not only have regular times for prayer but are also able to pray for prolonged periods. We read in the lives of the saints about their praying for hours every day. We read in the life of the Master that after His sultry noonday teaching He went to the mountains in the midnight that He might pray to God. He needed prayer, though it is strange for us to think so. He had not to plead in tears and shame, as is our lot so often. He had not to confess the sins of the day. He had never to weep before God because of some great transgression. He never had to wage our fight to subdue a sinful and rebellious nature. The prince of this world came and had nothing in Him. And yet He was the greatest of Pray-ers, and His disciples never,

so far as we know, said, 'LORD, teach us how to preach,' but they said, 'LORD, teach us how to pray.'

Those scenes of extraordinary devotion are very wonderful. Our LORD sought the solitude and silence of the mountain. Amid the hills, and with the long shadows cast by the moonlight on the sward, in the sacred house and temple of GOD He bowed Himself. There was none but GOD to hear Him as He prayed aloud, though all the clamour of the world was stilled.

There have been those who, up to their powers, live after the same manner. They can go on for hours praying with profit. Perhaps there are very few of us who would be equal to the privilege, and yet it has been wisely suggested that we do not know what we might accomplish for ourselves and for others by a night of prayer. We do not know what a difference it might make. We do not know how far that night might shine out gloriously amid these weary earth-bound years. There may be providential indications of the times we should set apart for this kind of supplication—perhaps before we make some great decision, perhaps before the blow strikes us which in our hearts we know is most surely coming. We might then do wisely and well to continue all night in

prayer to God. We know that those who have done such things have great power. They ask what they will and it is done unto them. Some few have possessed and possess this sacred awful gift.

III

But we desire chiefly to encourage those for whom such endeavours after God are too hard. The Scriptures deal very graciously with those for whom prayer is difficult. They give great encouragement to those who can only send up their supplications framed in a few words. Of this kind was the prayer of Nehemiah, offered between a question from his King and his answer. 'So I prayed to the God of heaven.' This has been called ejaculatory prayer, that is, prayer which hurls a dart—directs it, and is done. Such prayers are possible to all of us and in all circumstances. We can turn to God at all times and in all places, at the least danger, and in the slightest temptation. As St. BERNARD says: 'This kind of prayer needs no church, no altar, no sacrament.' It may be offered in silence and in speech, in labour and in rest. It may be uttered in every nook and angle of space, in every fragment and mite of time. We do well to appoint seasons for

prayer and to keep them. But in addition to this we should go through our work constantly praying. We should be saying, 'LORD, help me,' 'LORD, bless me,' 'LORD, keep me,' 'LORD, forgive me.' At every turn this dart may be thrown upward. Throw it when you are handling the letter which may contain fatal news. Throw it when the image of some loved one grows clear to your mind. Throw it when you are sorely tempted to passion or pride or despair. 'LORD, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.' That is an ejaculatory prayer. 'Give Thy poor, blind, wandering servant wisdom, give him the key to this lock'—is a prayer which is soon offered in the sore perplexities which more or less trouble us all. Ejaculatory prayer is supremely the prayer for the battlefield. There may be no time and no opportunity for stated prayer, but a man in need can concentrate everything into one great call to the mighty God.

So we would have this prayer more and more encouraged, more and more studied. Such prayer always brings the gift of the Holy Spirit. What more do we need? He is the Spirit of Wisdom, of Power, of Purity, and of Love. Does not this cover the whole of our needs? Prayer is nothing unless it brings response. It never fails to bring

it. It brings it more and more surely as we put growing faith and fervour in the supplication.

And so we come to see that true prayer should be the use and constant nature of all believers from the weakest to the strongest. It is so with some who have been privileged. They open the day with prayer. Prayer surrounds them like an atmosphere through the hours of toil and rest. The last conscious moments before sleep are spent in praying. Sometimes they even dream of prayer, and they say, 'When I am awake I am still with Thee.' 'Still with Thee.' That is the answer to prayer. Still with Thee, whatever the earthly circumstances may be—for God's dying people smile up at Him even when He slays them. Still with Thee, and all is well. Wherefore it is written, 'Pray without ceasing.'

VII

'BUT RATHER GIVING OF THANKS'

‘BUT RATHER GIVING OF THANKS’

Published June 22, 1916

THANKSGIVING is necessary for the completeness of prayer—as necessary as humiliation.

But often it is very hard to give thanks. When our lives are cut in two by a great grief—a grief which we know can never be got over in this life—then it is hard to give thanks. Never was this experience so common in our land as it is to-day.

We take from the books that lie nearest to our hands two examples. In a very moving book newly published, *Boy of My Heart*, we read this :

‘My husband comes along. There is something very odd about his step. And his face looks changed somehow; sharpened in feature and greyish white.

“How true it is that electric light sometimes makes people look a dreadful colour!” I think as he comes nearer to me.

‘I ran forward then to meet him.

“Where is Roland? Isn’t he here? I thought I heard him come.”

‘And then for the first time I noticed that the

boy's father had a bit of pinkish paper crushed up in his hand.

"Is that a telegram?" I cried eagerly, putting out my own hand. "Oh, give it to me! What does it say? Isn't he coming to-night?"

'One of my husband's arms was put quietly around me.

"No. It's no good our waiting for him any longer. He'll never come any more. He's dead. He was badly wounded on Wednesday at midnight, and he died on Thursday."

'For minutes that were like years the world became to me a shapeless horror of greyness in which there was no beginning and no end, no light and no sound. I did not know anything except that I had to put out my hand and catch at something, with an animal instinct to steady myself so that I might not fall. And then, through the rolling, blinding waves of mist, there came to me suddenly the old childish cry:

"Come and see me in bed, mother!"

'And I heard myself answering aloud:

"Yes, boy of my heart, I will come. As soon as the war is over I will come and see you in bed—in your bed under French grass. And I will say good-night to you—there—kneeling by your side—as I have always done."

'BUT RATHER GIVING OF THANKS' 73

**" Good-night !
Though Life and all take flight,
Never Good-bye ! " "**

Another and lesser though very real sorrow of these days, more even than of other days, is truly described by a well-known novelist :

A retired ship's captain in a Suffolk village has during fifty-five years saved something like £4000. He has put it into the local bank, and the bank suddenly breaks. A crowd has gathered round the building and he joins them, with his rugged, sun-burnt face as grey as ashes.

" " Mates," he said, " what is it ? " "

" " Merton's is broke—Merton's is broke ! " " they answered, clearing a way for him to read the notice for himself. In Somarsh Captain Bontnor was considered quite a scholar. As such he might, perhaps, have deciphered the clerkly handwriting in a shorter time than he now required, but on the East Coast a reputation is not easily shaken.

" They waited for the verdict in silence. After five minutes he turned round and his face gave some of them a shock. His kindly blue eyes had a painfully puzzled, incompetent look.

" " Yes, mates," he said, falling back into his old seafaring vernacular, forgetful of his best suit.
" Yes, shipmates, as far as I rightly understand it,

the bank's broken, and there's some of us that's ruined men."

'He stood for a moment looking straight in front of him—looking very old and not quite fit for life's battle. Then he moved away.

'“I'll just go and tell my niece,” he said.

'They watched him stump away—sturdy, unbroken, upright—still a man.

'“It's a hard end to a hard life,” said the old woman who had suggested hope.'

God does not ask us to behave as if our agony did not exist. When we are down in the new dust of a sudden blow He will hear our prayers though they are very imperfect. Chastisement for the present is not joyous but grievous. It is enough if we can say, 'It is the LORD, let Him do what seemeth Him good.' It is enough if we can say, 'I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it.' Some may rise higher than that and say with BUNYAN, 'I felt the bottom and it was good'—firm rock from shore to shore. It will be very much in the circumstances, however, if we can speak to each other softly of a hope.

I

Nevertheless, the pattern shown us in the Mount is that not only of resigned submission but of

'BUT RATHER GIVING OF THANKS' 75

thankful submission. Said one in the Old Testament, 'I will bless the LORD at all times.' Said another in the New Testament, 'In everything give thanks.' It is not characteristic of human nature to be very thankful towards GOD. When things go well with us we very speedily forget what we owe, and imagine that our own hand and brain have brought us to the position we occupy. In any case, it is easy to be grateful under blue skies. Any mill will grind when the wind blows. The times perhaps when we are spontaneously most grateful are those after we have escaped some great danger or have been delivered from some overwhelming fear. Then we are disposed to fall on our knees and bless GOD. We may even smile and weep to GOD's praise. But these in the normal life are not frequent experiences.

II

But Christianity points us on to giving thanks in everything, to blessing the LORD at all times. We are to bless Him in all winds and weathers. We are to praise Him for losses and for pains. Oh, how hard it is to obey! Martyrs have triumphed gloriously. The Three Children in the fiery furnace cried triumphantly, 'O all ye works of the LORD, praise Him and magnify Him for

ever.' But in all our lives small things to every one but ourselves count for very much. Take the frequent, the very frequent, experience of disappointment. Most people are silent about their disappointments, and so they bulk more largely in our thoughts than in our speech. But think of what you know. Think of the heart set upon some particular blessing with its whole force. Think of how the heart looks and waits and works, with the one aim. Think of the happy days when there seems good hope of winning. Then think of what it is to lose sight gradually of the prize, to see it farther and farther off, then finally to lose it altogether. The faithful in such circumstances will school themselves to accept their defeat. They will trust in GOD and believe that it was best for them that they should not attain to what they coveted. It is hard, however, to come to this.

Then how painful is a long, long suspense, while we watch by the sick-beds of the loved ones and every day see that the strength is ebbing and the eye growing dimmer. It is not easy to keep on blessing GOD. In the November of the human spirit, when all is cloudy and chilly, how hard is it to say with a resolute heart, 'I will bless the LORD now and at all times.' We are to give thanks in

'BUT RATHER GIVING OF THANKS' 77

everything, not *after* everything, but *in* everything—in the very moment of the intensest pressure of our pain.

III

But surely, however, the individual attitude of the believer should be one of thanksgiving. 'Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift.' All our assurance is furnished and all our need supplied from the Cross of Calvary. It was prophesied by them of old time that the CHRIST would destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. But often we say, How can these things be? Oh, what a covering this has been! What mysterious grief, what unspeakable sorrow, what heavy doubts has the world passed through! The riddles and the mysteries have puzzled and perplexed us till we were often in despair. For mystery is hard to bear between those who love one another. They cannot endure it. They are grieved by it, vexed by it, till they begin to think there must be a failure of love. Well, we are not come to the end of mystery, though we soon shall. But the mystery is not what it used to be, since the day when the veil of the temple was rent in twain. There is so



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



4.5

5.0

5.6

6.3

7.1

8.0

9.0

10

11.2

12.5

14

16

18

20

22.5

25

28

32

36

40

45

50

56

63

71

80

90

100

112

125

140

160

180

200



APPLIED IMAGE Inc

1653 East Main Street
Rochester, New York 14609 USA
(716) 482 - 0300 - Phone
(716) 288 - 5989 - Fax

much light that the darkness is endurable. The appeal to faith is irresistible, and the sad heart hears it. The day is not far off when we shall have fought our last battle of grief and fear, and then we shall see no longer in a glass darkly but face to face. Meanwhile we are content to have, not merely our own dim reading of GOD, but the glory of GOD in the face of JESUS CHRIST.

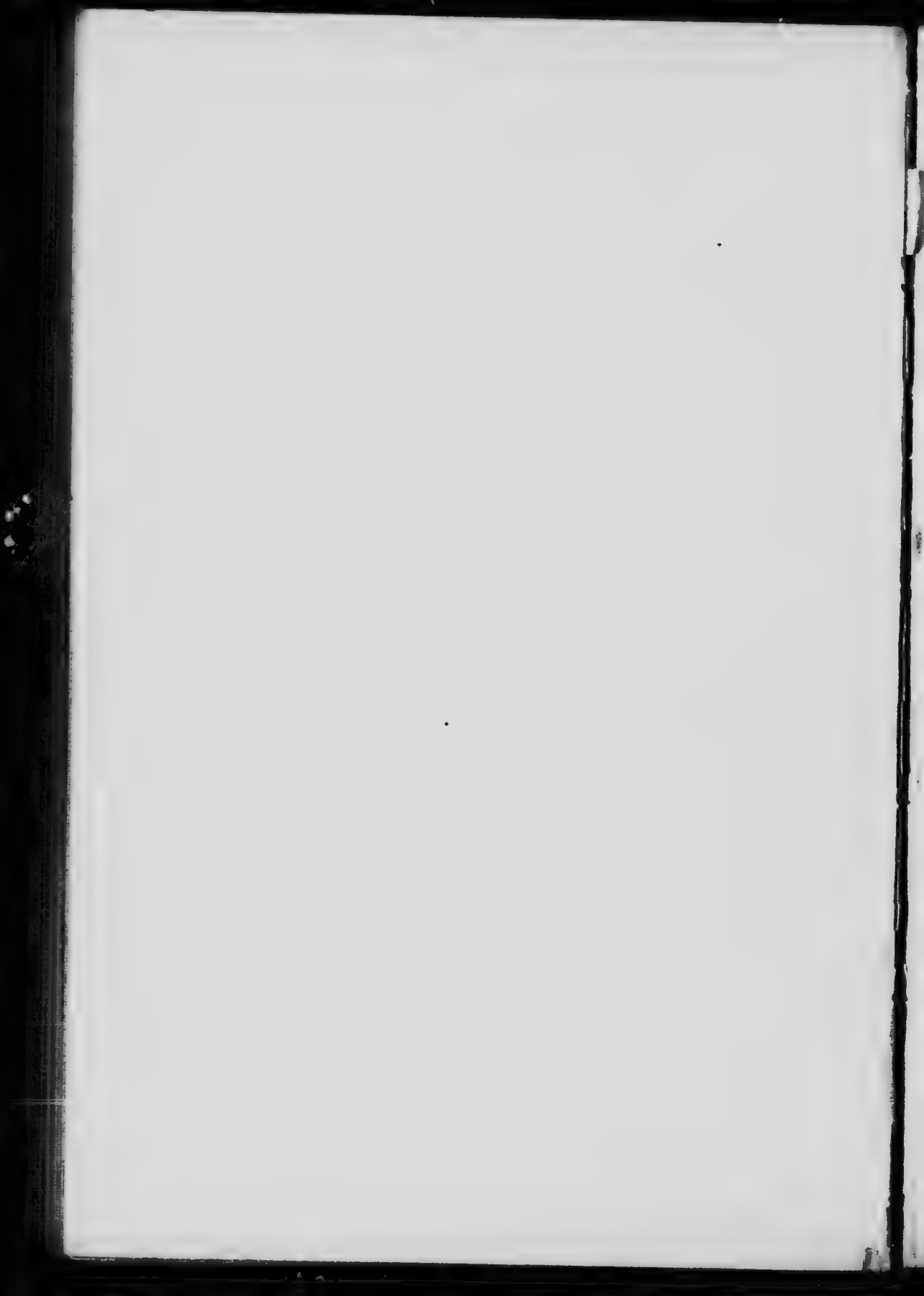
Also we possess the past with its treasures. The kindness of youth, the helpful love and holy example that were given to us to succour us, the disclosures made to us from the beginning of the true kingly character of the Christian—how many are these benefits of the LORD. We cannot recount them. For the means of grace and the hope of glory we are to be thankful. We are to be thankful because the supernatural life abides in us, that life which seems sometimes on the very point of dying and yet does not die. It is best that our belief in the future world should not be a faith that helps us on special occasions, but a calm and settled habit of the soul. It is well if we are driven to this assurance by some great sorrow. But it is better that we should nourish the hope and the love and the faith that looks beyond the grave, and know that many battles are not decided here and now.

IV

Let us give thanks also in this war. It is a stupendous catastrophe, and yet the hand of God is in it. We have cause to give God our poor thanks for wakening us to reality, for many of us feel that we have played at life till now. We thank God for the miracles of mercy and deliverance which He has vouchsafed. We thank Him for the unity of our nation. We thank Him for the heroism of our soldiers. We thank Him for those who are facing death fearlessly with the odds against them, for those who have taken duty as their guiding light and have thrown their precious lives with no niggard hand into the balance. As for those who have already given their lives, we remember continually the saying of the saint—
'I would lament for you if I dared.'

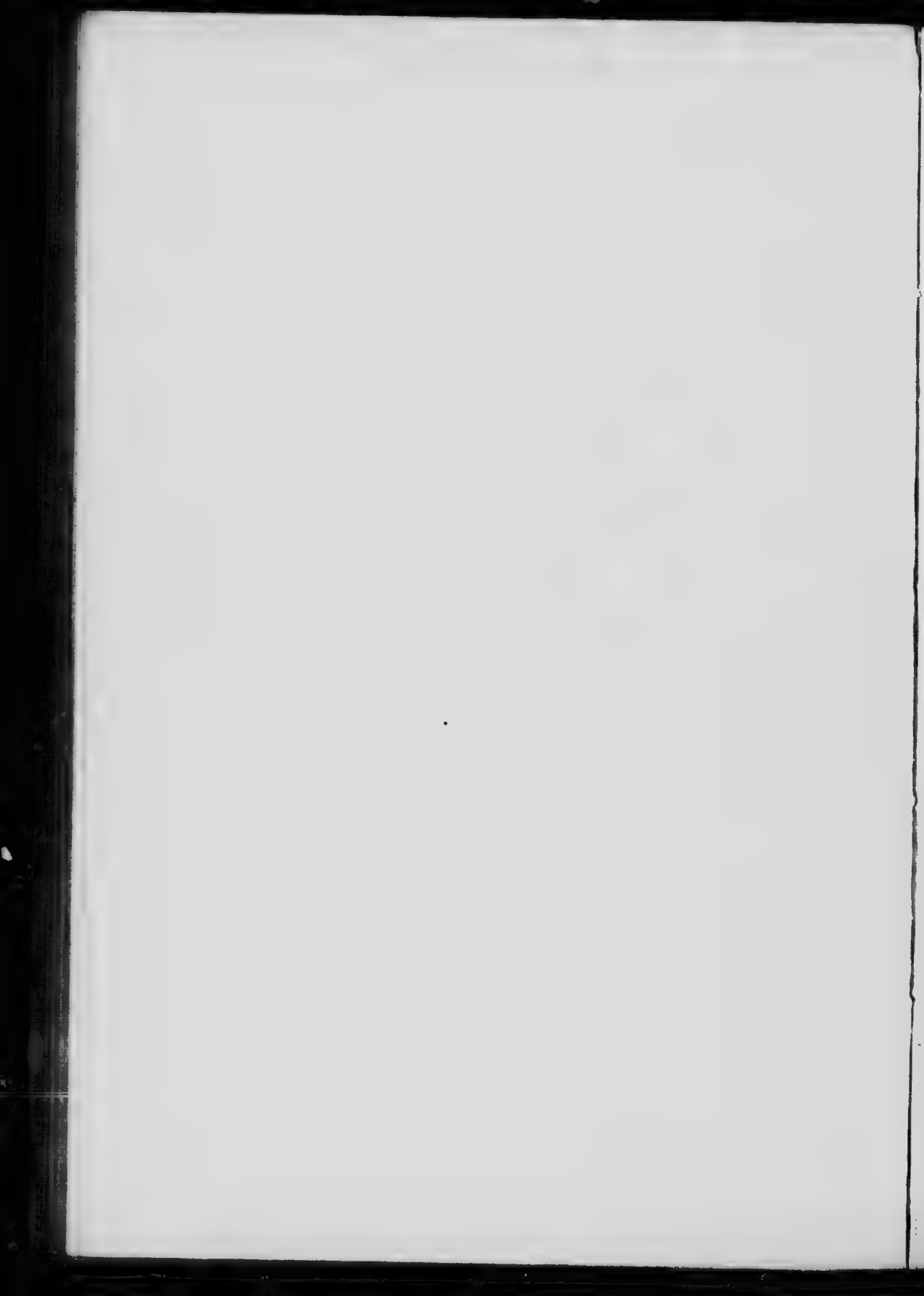
Nor in the darkest days has the nation ever lost hope. We have had our heavy reverses, and we have rallied from them to carry on the fight, and so shall to the end.

But to interpret the ways of God is too hard for us. All will be clear when the solemn thanksgiving of the redeemed to God winds up the drama of human history.



VIII

THE HAND OF GOD IN JUDGMENT



THE HAND OF GOD IN JUDGMENT

Published July 6, 1916

DOES GOD send judgments to the nation? Does GOD send judgments to the individual? After we have used all the lights we have, and all the lights GOD sends us in revelation, the problem remains full of mystery. We can faintly trace the purposes that are being accomplished, but we can do no more, and when we decide, as we must decide, on an affirmative answer, we are encountered by the greatest perils and by the strongest temptations to pride and to uncharitableness.

GEORGE MACDONALD, in his fine book *Alec Forbes*, has drawn for us the picture of the most lovable among all his heroines, Annie Anderson. Those who have read the book will never forget Annie's walk by the Wan Water to the old churchyard where her father's body had been laid to rest. She could not trace the grave, for no stone marked the spot where he sank in this broken earthy sea. There was no church and there was none to remember the building. It seemed as if the churchyard had swallowed the church, as the heavenly light shall one day swallow the sun and

moon. The dead lay quietly. There were no fears of the future to torment them, no blank falling suddenly upon the days. But even to that peaceful country there came the storms of life. Dr. MACDONALD recalls an actual incident, the rising of the great and destructive flood in that land. The rivers grew and ruled over ever-
ing in a wild, waste, foaming water. The rain fell as if a waterspout had broken overhead. It kept pouring out of the thick night while the streams went rushing by. Annie Anderson's life was very nearly lost, but her deliverance came when none expected it. It was thought that she was dead, and the miserable hypocrite with whom she lived said to his children, 'Bairns, Annie Anderson's droont. Ay, she's droont,' he continued, as they stared at him with frightened faces. 'The Almichty's ta'en vengeance upon her for her disobedience, and for brackin' the Sawbath. See what ye'll come to, bairns, gin ye tak up wi' ill loons, and dinna min' what's said to ye. *She's* come to an ill hinner-en' !'

The people of the neighbourhood were moved to a study of the prophecies :

'Those who read their Bibles, of whom there were many in that region, took to reading the prophecies, all the prophecies, and scarcely any-

thing but the prophecies. Upon these every man, either for himself or following in the track of his spiritual instructor, exercised his individual powers of interpretation, whose fecundity did not altogether depend upon the amount of historical knowledge. But whatever was known, whether about ancient Assyria or modern Tahiti, found its theoretic place. Of course, the Church of Rome had her due share of the application from all parties; but neither the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, nor either of the dissenting sects, went without its portion freely dealt, each of the last finding something that applied to all the rest. There were some, however, who cared less for such modes, and, themselves given to a daily fight with anti-christ in their own hearts, sought they, too, read the prophecies—to fix their eyes on certain sins, and certain persons classed according to these their sins. With a burning desire for the safety of their neighbours, they took upon them the strongest words of rebuke and condemnation, so that one might have thought they were revelling in the idea of the vengeance at hand, instead of striving for the rescue of their neighbours from the wrath to come.'

Many of us are like the people in the little town of Glamerton these many years ago.

I

It is vain for us to attempt the problem of the origin of evil. All the thoughts of men are consumed in that burning fiery furnace. Some things, however, we must believe or die. We must believe that the universe is under the administration of God the Father. We must lift our hearts up against a desolate atheism and against an equally desolate fatalism. We must seek to trace the hand of God, and we must believe that the hand is working in wisdom and in love, however strange, however dark its dealings may be. We must cling with all the strength we possess, with all the strength we can win, to the faith that the LORD is working, even when all we can say is, 'It is the LORD, let Him do what seemeth Him good.' We must hold that to individuals and to nations God appoints their portion, and that this is done in righteousness and in love.

II

It is wisest to begin by what comes close to us, with the experience we know. We should consider deeply the reasons for the afflictions that have marked our own lives. We must trace all our trials to our God. '*Thy wrath lieth hard*

upon me. *Thou* hast afflicted me with all Thy waves.' All suffering of any sort or kind comes to us from the Divine hand. Believers should look past second causes on to the first. They should hear the rod and Him Who hath appointed it.

Perhaps our greatest danger is to watch for judgments that fall upon others. Many, like the people in Glamerton, are amazingly apt to believe in judgments to particular persons. They are ready to talk about accidents as if they were judgments. The upsetting of a boat on the river is reckoned to follow a breaking of the Sabbath. The accidental fall of a house is taken to signify the special sinfulness of its occupants. Our LORD set aside all this presumption for ever when He declared that the men upon whom the Tower of Siloam fell were not sinners above all sinners that were on the face of the earth. It is very easy to induce people to humiliate themselves because of the sins of others. It is not so easy to induce a real contrition in men for their own sins.

What are we to say, then, about afflictions? Are we to take every affliction as a chastisement? Is every trial to be accounted an act of judgment? Most assuredly this is not so. There is nothing

more familiar in the world than the sight of great trial going along with evident and shining goodness. But, further, affliction in itself has no power to effect the purpose for which it was sent. Many afflictions lead to bitterness, obstinacy, unbelief, and clinging to evil. The affliction that is accepted—what Dr. MACLAREN used to call 'accepted sorrow'—is an angel bringing a message from God. But the undisciplined heart may be like iron hammered on an anvil and made the more close-grained thereby. There is no question on which our spiritual guides have more profoundly differed than the question whether wrongdoing is punished in this world. We have known Christians who believed that for every sin they had committed they had been punished. We have known others who believed that this world is not the place of punishment, and that for the righting of wrong we must look to the dark beyond. We may be sure, at least, that the history of this world is not the judgment of this world.

We can see reasons other than transgression for affliction. Affliction rightly taken deepens the character. After going through a great sorrow we realise that before it we were half asleep, and that it has wakened us up and made us new

THE HAND OF GOD IN JUDGMENT 89

creatures. Life has become significant and solemn as it never was before.

'Call forth thy powers, my soul, and dare
The conflict of unequal war.'

We may say also that, rightly used, affliction brings us into sympathy with our fellow-sufferers and teaches us how to bind up their wounds.

We may say, too, that affliction teaches us how lightly we must hold all things here. In times when our little nests are shaking, when prosperity is passing from us, when the wings of death overshadow the house, when the mind is distracted and marvels how all is to end, there is something gained. Patience has been strained, faith has been tested, but love has been proved, as one says, to the very uttermost point, and everything grows stronger and nearer to perfection.

III

But it is no doubt wise for us as individuals to search our hearts and see whether any wrongdoing can be detected which has brought the divine judgment. We must not judge even ourselves unrighteously. We may discover that our afflictions are not chastisements, and that we desire in our inmost hearts to depart from iniquity.

In these circumstances men must have faith. They must regard themselves as bearing troubles which are sent for the comforting and help of others, and perhaps also for the prevention of sin in the future. No doubt God reassures many of His trembling children and helps them to understand more deeply that word, 'Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.' But for ourselves we should be willing to search our hearts as the spies searched Canaan, and to fall down in humiliation at the feet of God. But against such inquiry into the hearts of others we are expressly warned. It is one of the last and most evil manifestations of Pharisaism. Let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God for what we have done ourselves and for what we have done in the neglect of others. But beyond that our so-called humiliation is only presumption.

IV

As God judges individuals, so we must hold that He judges nations. There is a judgment going on. God does not judge willingly, for we know that judgment is a strange work, foreign to His heart, though not to His nature. But love compels judgment. It compels it, we repeat. For see how slow His judgments are! See how

.

THE HAND OF GOD IN JUDGMENT 91

He multiplies His warnings ! See how, rising up early, He tells men that He will smite in order that He may never need to smite ! When the long-prepared mine explodes it is because it must. God has often to lament, 'In vain have I smitten your children ; they received no correction.' May we not say that in the case of nations, as in the case of individuals, judgment is the token of a father's love ? For the sake of the love of God we must hold firmly the belief in the judgments of God.

We are called upon at this time to humble ourselves as individuals and as a nation. How shall we take part in the national humiliation ? Are Dissenters to humiliate themselves because of the sins of the Church of England ? Is the Church of England to humiliate herself because of the sins of Dissenters ? Are Radicals to be humbled because of the transgressions of Conservatives ? or Conservatives because of the transgressions of Radicals ? Be sure that all humiliation of this kind is utterly unreal, vain, false, null. God has given us as a people singular privileges. With all our sins and shortcomings there is enough to make us thankful and loyal and humble patriots. But it is the way of God to chastise often most severely those who are nearest to Him, those who owe Him

most. It may well be so with us. The darkness will scatter if we truly pray, in a deep personal humiliation, confession, and repentance.

Would that each of us could settle into an earnest prayer that we may not be rebels against the will of God.

IX
IMPORTUNATE PRAYER

IMPORTUNATE PRAYER

Published July 27, 1916

MUCH of our prayer is not importunate. In ordinary circumstances it is languid and formal. We put little will into it, little energy of desire.

But now many have come to know for the first time what importunate prayer means. One burning desire has consumed the rest. We have known what it is to say, 'Give me my petition or I die.' Chief of importunate prayers is the prayer *Transeat calix*—Let this cup pass. This cup, brimming with tribulation, draws nearer and nearer to reluctant and paling lips, and the spirit is affrighted and calls to God. Fathers, mothers, wives, lovers pray that prayer, and wonder how it is with their dearest in these valleys and heights of death.

Oftentimes they are stricken and blinded by receiving the tidings that this one prayer, the nearest to the heart and the dearest, can be uttered no more. Each name on the long list on which our eyes fasten every morning means the stilling of an importunate prayer, often of many importunate prayers, which for weeks and months

and years have been lifted up to God. It may be helpful that we should consider the place and power of importunate prayer as our LORD has taught it.

I

The teaching of CHRIST, so broad and bold, seems at times to guarantee the almightiness of importunate prayer. He has Himself told the story of the widow who, by sheer importunity, prevailed over the unjust judge. Everything was apparently against her. She was praying to an unrighteous judge who cared for nothing but his own ease and boasted of his own contempt for GOD and man. She had no claim upon him. She was without a friend, for her many journeys had to be taken alone. She was without the right of access, and must have forced her weary way with many to oppose her. She had no promise. Indeed, she had less than no promise, for she was encountered with rebuffs every time of her pleading. Yet she prayed, and in the end her prayer was answered.

Contrast her plight with the place of the children of the Resurrection. They pray to the HOLY FATHER, Who is Love. They pray to Him Who spared not His Son, but delivered Him up to death

for us all. They pray to a God Who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should have everlasting life. They pray with a mighty Friend and Advocate to help them. This Friend ever liveth to make intercession for them. They pray as those who are bidden to pray. It is not only that they have a right. They have more than a right. They are plied and exhorted with many arguments to take their weariness to the Throne of Grace, which can never be moved. They have exceeding great and precious promises, for the Bible is studded with encouragements to prayer. They have a Priest at the right hand of God. Their Priest is a Son over His own house, Whose house are they if they hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. They have experiences behind them which are sacred and assured. No believer has ever been able to tell, with anything like completeness, what he has known about the power of prayer. But many know so much that they have never been able to understand the doubts and difficulties of those who do not pray or who pray reluctantly and rarely. To the true believer all life has been an answer to prayer. Many of those answers are visible, so quick-coming, so surely the work of

God, that to doubt them would be to doubt everything. Sometimes they are almost inclined to believe that even erring prayers have a strange power whereby God exhorts His children evermore to plead first that the Holy Will may be done. Also there is the record of the work of God for His redeemed people. When faith and hope are low the spirit is strengthened by falling back on the long story of God's grace.

II

We know very well, however, that the promises which attach to prayer do not and cannot attach to every petition. We know that not all of our prayers can be granted. Not every one can come back whole, or even wounded, from the battle. Even while they know this the bereaved must encounter days of desolation—days when they seem to walk in darkness and to have no light. The house is still and the chair is empty and the great hard desolation settles down and seems as if it would never lift. The frail spirit fears that it may never reach the happy goal at all. It is as if it were left a prey to the enemy and robbed of all that made life sweet. The thoughts will not come. The words of comfort seem to be spoken without meaning. The petitions, if they are

offered, go up without heart. The poor and drear life that stretches out before is not worth living. The old intimacies of faith seem to have ended. Their days are as a dream. The sufferers cannot enter into the Sanctuary of the LORD's Passion. They cannot feel themselves set as a seal on His heart, as a seal on His arm. But the comfort is that CHRIST is there even when His presence is not realised.

‘When thou fearest, God is nearest.’

MARY wept at the sepulchre for her LORD, and He was standing beside her. The disciples sat in the room with closed doors, and the LORD was among them. The travellers to Emmaus said, ‘We trusted that it should have been He which should have redeemed Israel,’ little knowing that the true Redeemer of Israel was the companion of their journey.

It was meet and right to go on praying for the beloved life while the time for prayer was. But it is not promised that importunate prayer for the earthly life will be answered. Christians are coming to understand better than they did for a time that true prayer concerns itself most deeply with the spiritual gifts which it is God's will we should possess. Once it was thought a sign of

the Divine favour to attain success in business. We know better now. Are all our millionaires Christian? Some are open scoffers, and yet everything they touch turns to gold. What then? Why, nothing. It was appointed that our LORD should for our sakes become poor, and His greatest disciples have been poor, and the time may come again when poverty shall be accounted the mark of a Christian. No; what we are taught to hope for is the children's bread. Some may solace themselves with the crumbs that fall from the table, but there is room for each believer at the table, where he shares with the rest. The children's bread has never been the bread of great earthly prosperity. The children's bread has always been mingled with tears. The heirs of salvation have had appointed to them the experience of sorrow. If the experience of sorrow comes to us it is a proof that we are among the sons and the daughters of God.

III

What, then, are the bereaved to hope for and to pray for? Above all things they are to pray for the inward calm of faith and love. They are to pray for a true vision of immortality. They are to ask the assurance that the Everlasting

Love keeps them and their dear ones safe for one another, though Jordan rolls between. They are to comfort themselves with the certainty that higher work has been found for their beloved in a better country, that is, an heavenly. They are passed first to the new morning, and there they wait for those who have been parted from them for a time. And it is for those who remain to live as those who know that they are the heirs of immortality, and to seek to reach the spirit-land unsoiled and noble.

IV

But the importunity need not, and must not, cease. We must be importunate in prayer—importunate for that answer which God is always willing to bestow. What do we ask for when we pray? In the end of the day we are asking, whether we know it or not, for power—power to endure, power to labour, power to trust, power to fight temptation, power to keep the faith. That is, we are praying for the HOLY GHOST. Give us the HOLY GHOST to lift up our life to the Divine thought, and all is well. An eminent thinker of the last generation, whose creed was in some respects defective, said in his old age that his 'whole inner life had been one long self-distrust

and conscious need of a power beyond my own.' He believed that he had received that power and was upheld by it through his long pilgrimage. What do we need beyond the direct life with God, the personal intercourse with CHRIST, the impartation of the strength needed for the day, the power of vividly realising the Divine life and fellowship? The immediate action of God in the human soul—this is the answer, the supernatural answer to the prayer of faith.

But true prayer, though it begins with self, will not rest with self. We are to pray for those nearest us, and we are to go on praying to the very last of life, whether we see our petitions answered or not. We are to pray for the coming of the kingdom of God, and to care for it, and to offer sacrifice for it. We have to pray with importunity for the victory of that cause to which so many of our beloved have given their lives, for we believe with them that it is the cause of righteousness, of liberty, and of peace. All such prayers are to be importunate prayers, to be offered till they are answered. Those who pray in that manner may often die with many petitions unfulfilled, and yet with an inner assurance that they will be fulfilled, that God will grant their requests and gather them to-

gether at last. So when the earthly tabernacle clatters to the ground, a mass of boards and ruins, the sacred priestly soul that has long ministered there will hear a great Voice saying, 'Come up hither.'

X

'THE ROCKS ARE NOT BURNING'

'THE ROCKS ARE NOT BURNING'

Published July 29, 1915

IN a very beautiful and suggestive speech delivered at the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, Dr. RENDEL HARRIS most aptly brought before his audience the lessons of the Epistle to the Hebrews as they bear upon the present time. He reminded his audience that the inspired author wrote when the passing world and the permanent were thrown together much as they are now. He was able, in perhaps the greatest crisis which the Christian world has ever faced, to look down through the flames in which Church and State were being consumed together, and to signal back to us the observation that the rocks were not burning, that they showed no signs of passing away, that the situation was not a call to fear, but a call to faith and a call to the reception of grace, of fresh grace, and new grace, whereby we may under new conditions serve God and adorn His gospel.

It is verily true that this is a time of fears and tears, of agony and bloody sweat for many, and of heartache for all. The war shout, which we

thought had fallen silent, waxes louder and louder. Never was the world at war like this. We have not merely that subtle, implacable smiting of the black waves of change which is a concomitant of all life. We have undreamt-of and inconceivable earthquake and catastrophe. The very earth seems to reel under our feet. The foundations are destroyed. The world is deluged with blood. The kingdoms are going to rack. Earthly fortunes are being altered in an hour. Those whom we thought would outlive us, through whom we had some hold of the future, die before us because they can fight and we cannot. Truly we live in an inverted order, and it is not wonderful that multitudes, even of the faithful, are wearied and worn with sorrow, distracted by dark forebodings that will not down. In the mist a mysterious sadness gathers over the youngest and the lightest hearts.

Profiting by Dr. RENDEL HARRIS's hint, we will review the picture of the changing which is drawn by the inspired writer, and then set over against it his picture of the permanent.

I

He begins by telling us that the old sacrificial order, so dear to those he was addressing, so bound up with their inmost thoughts and feelings, rever-

enced from the beginning of life, had to pass away. Earthly priests had to go. They were made priests after the law of a carnal commandment which was in force no longer. There was no need now of the priests who offered daily sacrifices, first for their own sins, and then for the sins of the people. There was no need of the old tabernacle and of the blood of bulls and of goats and the ashes of the heifer sprinkling the unclean, and of the divers washings and the carnal ordinances that had existed for so long. The priests who had infirmity, who, when their time came, had to yield to the inexorable, were to have their place no more at all in the Christian Church. Thus the old foundations were shifted, and the old homes of religion fell, and those who first read the Epistle were almost broken-hearted, for they lived by these and for these. Even the illuminated were in fear of so vast a change.

Nor is this all. The whole structure of earthly society was shattered and brought to the ground. Worldly possessions were taken away. Instead of riches there was poverty. Life was maintained on bare necessities. Christians endured the great fight of affliction. They were made a gazing stock by reproaches. They were spoiled of their goods. Even the strongest and the simplest faith

had to be rallied to meet these experiences. Nor did the writer hold out any hope of more peaceful and stable times. On the contrary, he told his people that chastening and scourging were to be their fortune. He spoke even of a time when the stable earth and heavens should wax old as doth a garment. He whose voice once shook the earth from the mountain that might not be touched had promised, saying, 'Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also the heaven.' What does this mean? We cannot tell. The poet writes about these 'ruinable skies.' Ruinable! Is everything therefore insecure? Are not the heavens themselves safe and free from fear?

II

For all these the blessed writer has an answer, and it seems as if he lingered with a certain joy over such words as 'same' and 'continue' and 'remainest' and 'unchangeable,' and, very specially, 'rest.' All that was of God would endure, unscathed by the uttermost violence of the storm. The rocks were not burning. He begins very grandly where he ends, and that is with God. 'God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His SON, whom He

hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds.' It is to the Eternal SON, who, being the brightness of GOD's glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power—to the SON who has by Himself purged our sins—that the throne is assigned. 'He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.'

Thus we deal with CHRIST whose kingdom shall have no end. Unto the SON He saith, 'Thy throne, O GOD, is for ever and ever.' Earth and heaven shall perish, but Thou remainest. '*Thou* art the same, and *Thy* years shall not fail.' There shall be an end of His enemies, for they shall become His footstool.

The Epistle is concerned mainly with the gospel of the priesthood. But the offices of our LORD cannot be divided. He is Prophet, Priest, and King in every action. He is the eternal High Priest, priest for ever after the order of MELCHISEDEC. The priests after the order of Aaron passed away. They were transitory, and their work was transitory. They were not suffered to continue by reason of death, but the SON was consecrated for evermore. Once in the end of the world He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and thus He accomplished that work of salvation, in the full

sense, which had not been completed before. By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Instead of the waning and ineffectual ordinances of old time, which left those who came under them so little helped, we have the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, CHRIST JESUS. He is set as a SON over His own house, Whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

So much for the priesthood of the new Church as compared with the priesthood of the old. But what of our hopes, thwarted and ruined as they seem to be? What of our trials? The answer is that our hopes are to be fixed no lower than CHRIST Himself, ascended and enthroned. About hopes for this world there is not much to say. There is no promise of the restitution of the goods which have been taken by robbers. But in heaven we have a better and a more enduring substance, where thieves cannot break through nor steal. Resting on two immutable things, the word and the oath of God, we have strong consolation. We have laid hold of the hope set before us, and that hope is an anchor of the soul. It is an anchor flung into the azure deeps of that sea which is above all heavens, in the sanctuary within the veil. It takes hold of the Forerunner who has for

'THE ROCKS ARE NOT BURNING' 113

us entered in, even JESUS made a High Priest for ever.

We are promised no escape from pain. All that can be said is that our pain is not like the pain of apostasy. Even if it were, the faithful are taught that the chastening and the scourging of life—grievous though they be—are nevertheless the work of love. 'Whom the LORD loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.' These chastenings yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to those who endure them.

What of the dead? This is the question that in the times tries the heart more than any other. We look at the long roll of the elders who obtained a good report by faith, who achieved mighty deeds by faith, subdued kings, worked righteousness, stopped the mouths of lions, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. These all died in faith, and they did not believe a lie.

But there is more than this, so much more, so sweet and so wonderful, that one shrinks from trying to expound it. By hope and by faith we have the assurance that the faithful dead are happy in GOD'S keeping. Hope for this writer is not the pathetic figure which a modern painter has made her, wistful, weak, and pale. Hope

to him is steadfast, and Faith is steadfast also, and both point one way. But there is more than this, for it is written that 'we are come to Mount Sion, unto the city of the living God, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.' We are near them did we know it. We have come nearer them, did we know it, than Faith and Hope can ever take us. We are with them; we almost join them in the new song. We are in fellowship here and now, compassed with darkness as we are, often so lonely, so lost—we are in communion with the church of the first-born.

Finally, we are approaching a time when all the cruelty of change will end. Ere that time come we may have to encounter much, for the word 'Yet once more' means the removing of those things that are shaken, but this is that the things which cannot be shaken may remain, and we receive a kingdom that cannot be moved, eternal in the heavens.

III

The last chapter of the book is made up partly of practical counsel, but it is impossible for the writer to keep long away from the thought that rules him. We find him saying almost at once,

'JESUS CHRIST, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' Yes, he tells us, there is one Rock that is stable amid the waves and billows and ragings of the sea. **JESUS CHRIST** is the same. Though the whole scenery of this passing world be altered, though the faces we were fain to look on all fade away, He remains the same as our fathers knew Him, the same as the Hebrews knew Him, the same as Eternity knew Him, and always to be the same. Dr. **HARRIS** points out with very fine insight how the writer says, 'Let brotherly love continue.' This also was to endure, no matter how the earth might rock. It was to continue and to last in all worlds and through all ages. There is a tender, reverent remembrance of the dead ministers of **CHRIST**—they which have the rule over you, which have spoken unto you the word of God, 'whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation,' which means the manner in which they died. He (the writer) was hardly conscious of separation, for to him the thin veil was shot through and through with gleams of light from the other side. All the book is laden with warnings against apostasy. There are counsels on what becomes us in a world like this—contentment with food and raiment, willingness to sacrifice out of very small means, obedience to

holy teachers, and continued prayer. But the writer is always turning to our LORD JESUS CHRIST, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, as the Answer, the Consolation, the Refuge, the Succourer, the Prophet, the Priest, the King, of His tried but faithful people.

‘On my soul
Looks Thy fair Face and makes it still.’

XI

TO THE QUIET IN THE LAND

TO THE QUIET IN THE LAND

Published January 20, 1916

WE had thought of addressing this article to country ministers, but it has seemed well to widen its scope a little and to take in the quiet Christians who are left in the land during this period of agony and conflict and strain. There are many ministers who are placed in obscure streets of great towns. There is a host of unknown workers—Sunday-school teachers, visitors, and others—who in their humble spheres are serving the LORD CHRIST. There are Christians in the home exercising steady but unobtrusive influences. With conferences and committees and manifestos these have nothing to do. Their names are not mentioned in newspapers. But they are as much in the heart of the strife as any others. They read with painful interest the news of the war. Their hearts are often wrung with anxiety. Their dearest may be among the roar of the shells. Often they are sorely perplexed by conflicting voices. It is on them, humanly speaking, that the welfare of the Church and the nation chiefly

depends, and we would in all humility address to them a message of heartening.

The circulation of the common life of prayer and love and sacrifice through our smallest churches is an end devoutly to be wished. The pastors should be able to say, 'My little kingdom is my own.' It may not be free from internal upheavals and occasional storms, but these should end in the face of a vast and universal sorrow. GEORGE MACDONALD once said that in spite of grumbling and *tristesse* ours more than any other nation has been, is, and will be saved by hope. In the maintenance of hope we are fellow-workers with GOD, and most of us can serve Him best, and can best satisfy the burning desire to help in making the world clean, by sweeping our own little room.

There are gloomy prophecies about the future of the Church. The smallest of Christian assemblies has its roll of honour, with a mounting list of names. So many are dead or dying, so many are far away in the very heart of peril. What is to become of the remnant? Will the Christian society survive? For answer we say that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The Church shall live, and not die, and declare the works of the LORD. Christian workers at home and abroad have a greater opportunity presented

to them than was ever before given in the world's history.

I

There are certain things that should be said about Christian preaching at this time. Christianity is being asked to do what it was never meant to do, what it never did and never will do on this earth. If we are asked to explain why this war took place, we are face to face with a mystery which will remain a mystery till in His good time the mystery of God shall be finished. No one has ever been able by any searching thought to explain the origin of evil and of pain. We do see a little way in the darkness. We see that we cannot be good without consenting to be made good. We must lay hold of CHRIST that we may be partakers of His holiness. A goodness that is forced upon us is not a real goodness. We can also see how sharp suffering is often sent to break the crust that has gathered about the heart. God often brings His suffering children to their home and their blessedness by the road of pain. We can also see the glory of vicarious sacrifice. This is the doctrine which, according to testimony, has taken hold of the soldiers in the trenches. They seem to understand, as they never did, the

meaning of the death of CHRIST. It is the task of the theologian to show how from vicarious suffering is developed the great oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the world. He could not do so if he did not begin with vicarious sacrifice, as we see it, between man and man. But the soldier takes a flying leap and does not enter into the mysteries of the Eternal and Adorable Trinity. Nor need he. It is enough that he believes that CHRIST died for him on Calvary and that the Blood of JESUS CHRIST cleanses from all sin.

But we should be the last to say that these were complete explanations. Why does not God give more grace? All Christians agree that they are saved by grace. Why is the river of grace so scant? Why does God elect one to suffering and another to ease? Why should this one, who had twined his life with so many other lives, be shot, while the other, who has none to mourn him, escapes? The only answer is that we cannot answer. We cannot answer one of a thousand. Clouds and darkness are round about God, though justice and judgment are the foundation of His throne. His way is in the sea and His path in the deep waters, and His footsteps are not known; nevertheless He leads His people like a flock.

All we can say is that this is a world for faith. We must have faith in God, in His Love, in His Power, in His Wisdom. We must cast ourselves upon Him in the hour of deepest darkness, assured that He understands and that we shall yet understand. Above all, we must put in the forefront the Cross of Calvary and the broken heart of CHRIST. God is not indifferent to our sorrows, for He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. This is a world where only believers can truly live.

Another challenge which we are not called upon to answer is to account for the failure of the Church. There never was any promise that the path should be easy, that the Church doing her duty should annex province after province of life in the world and master them. On the contrary, when the Son of Man came, not to be ministered unto but to minister, He failed to convert the world. His apostles also failed. They had successes, but they were partial and incomplete. So it has always been. Slow, and even broken and tortuous, has ever been the journey of the Mystic Spouse through the wilderness, even though she has leant upon her Beloved. There are great promises of a fairer time, the meaning of which

will some time appear more plainly to the soul. But the work of the Church and the failure of the Church are as they have ever been.

II

What then is the preacher to do? Much that he alone can do. The mere fact that Christianity is the only religion that has fairly measured itself with sin and sorrow and death is the overwhelming fact of the present time. The preacher who has the powerful enforcement of faith and earnestness will find that he has such an access to human hearts as he never had before. Let him only try it. Let him preach CHRIST and the new world from which CHRIST came, to which He returned, which He is still making, and he will speak to weary, aching, broken hearts. There are those who for years have looked for no personal blessing from without. There are those for whom this experience seems to have begun. They seemed to be rich the other day in the love of husband or son or brother—and now! It looks as if the dark future could bring them nothing. To such we are to preach the present love of CHRIST, that love, given and returned, which is the chief blessedness of life. ROBERTSON of Brighton was as remote from cant as any Christian preacher ever was,

and yet he, when asked whether he loved CHRIST, replied with perfect simplicity that with one exception he loved no one else in comparison. Did any of the seed of JACOB ever seek His face in vain?

If we thought that these dear lives had vanished into the immeasurable inane, dying out like a puff of wind, we should indeed be left desolate. It would hardly be worth while to fight for anything. A quiet life on terms of servitude might be accepted hopelessly. But when we know CHRIST we know that not one of these lives is unreckoned. If not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father, does any soldier fall to the ground unheeded? Let us pray for those who are still with us, and let us be bravely hopeful for those who have gone. The conditions of service are very simple. Long ago it was foretold that the days would come when the sun would be turned into darkness and the moon into blood. But there was an easy way out of it. 'Whosoever shall call upon the name of the LORD shall be saved.' A look at the Crucified One, a calling on the LORD—these are enough. CHRIST knows all. From His Cross He has flooded the world with forgiveness, and all that we have to do is to dip in the cup. There is soil in every heart for the

growth of the Gospel seed. We shall find them again, though we may not know the place of their graves. It is a great thing to have this impulse, to look forward and to expect the reunion. This hope maketh not ashamed, and it soon shapes the whole atmosphere of the spirit to its likeness.

III

Perhaps the greatest opportunity is that of pastoral work. Ministers are parted for a season from the young men of their churches, but they have left to them the fathers and the mothers and the children. They have also left to them, and will have left to them, the gallant men who are destined to return. If the pastor will lay himself out to serve his people in this fiery trial he will discover that worship is ministration, and that the commoner service is divine service. If death has come he can administer consolation through the good hope. If there is suspense he can hearten and pray. He can understand the wife and mother who have had no letters for a week. He can understand those who are afraid to open the telegrams. Whatever comes he has the Word of CHRIST to repeat. All this he will do for his people, not as one who helps from afar, but as one of themselves, not with condescension, but as one who finds his highest life in

the companionship of the sufferers. Very many ministers have their own sons out fighting for the cause, and they will receive in many cases as much comfort as they impart. It is by prayer that the work will be best accomplished. Perhaps we have laid too much stress upon great public gatherings for intercession. They are good even if people are only driven to them by fear. But CHRIST said that where two or three were gathered together in His name, He was there in the midst of them. We repudiate the hateful nonsense spoken about 'little churches and little ministers.' We abhor the arithmetical exercises which tend to show that if there are not thirty or fifty or a hundred in a chapel it ought to be closed. God has done great things in smaller assemblies than these, and He will do them again. We would not have ministers be too anxious for large meetings. But let the meetings go on, and if they are informed by grace one and another will quietly come and join in the supplications.

It is most important that the pastor should put himself into closest touch with the men who are away. He ought to see all the letters they send home. If he is doing his duty the letters will be brought to him. He should write many letters himself to the soldiers. They are made happy,

as every one testifies, by friendly letters. They are comforted by the thought that they are remembered and prayed for at home. If this is the habit, those who come back will cling faster than ever to the village pastor, the village church, and the God of our salvation. But that end is not primary. It is a plain duty, and it ought to be a very great privilege, to make the life of the church as much as possible the life of a loving family while the trouble lasts.

Once more, we have the children, and they ought to be considered as they have never been considered. Is it right that the churches should allow the number of their scholars to decrease so much and so rapidly? Some little decrease may be inevitable through the changing conditions, but we at least have never heard of any well-directed movement for canvassing the children and bringing them within the range of Christian teaching. Can any one tell us of any minister who has gone with his Sunday-school teachers to visit the children outside and tried to bring them in? We should be very glad to hear of such cases, but they must be very few. No. What our churches will do is to hold conferences, and papers will be read and speeches delivered, and in due course a decrease will be reported. It has been

said that every minister who allows his Sunday-school to diminish is a slacker. This is undoubtedly most unfair, because there are districts where the population has largely decreased, but there is more truth in the charge than we like to think.

Let the children then be watched, shepherded, brought in, ministered unto. That is the true end of the Sunday-school—to bring children to JESUS. The communication of knowledge is a very small part of the business, and it may be horribly abused. We want the children to have their minds stored with precious texts and godly hymns, and to have their hearts directed to the Saviour who sought them. We ought to look with a new interest at the children who are to live in the new world in which many of us are to have so small a share. They should know the solemnity of this war. They should be taught about sin and redemption. Their lives should be so cultivated and tended that they will blossom at length into faith and love and obedience. This is the way to the heart of mothers and to the heart of fathers also. It is not the will of our Father in heaven that one of these little ones should perish, and if we have to report decreases, let us make sure that we have done what we could to prevent them.

We hope we have said enough to show that the

worker has a great power in the land. Let these workers be remembered. It would be well if those of us who were brought up in country churches gave special thought to them and to their pastors. If we do so we shall help to maintain within them that sense of Love at the heart of things which is the chief need of us all to-day.

se
se
es
rs.
m
ch

XII

WHEN THE WOUNDED GO HOME

WHEN THE WOUNDED GO HOME

Published April 1, 1915

WE are thinking not so much of the wounded who are recovering from their wounds, who are being tended with the utmost love and skill, who have been honourably dismissed from the fight, or are being strengthened for its renewal. They have gone home, or they will go home, to sun themselves in the warmth of devotion. But what of those who have died of their wounds, who lie cold and stark on the battlefield, who, it may be, have been buried in nameless graves known only to God? Have not they, too, gone home—home to a love compared with which ours was untender—to a care compared with which ours was urgent?

Surely Easter and its messages are precious in these days as they have never been before. Never were there so many of our people bereaved or about to be bereaved. What anguished hearts need is the Easter assurance of life. For we cannot, try as we may, love the dead as dead. We may, and we do, love their memories; but if we love themselves, then they are living. Love is for life; it cannot dwell with death.

Easter comes to us with the assurance that the dead are alive, that death has been abolished, that life and immortality have been brought to light by the Gospel. We are not left to the foiled searching of mortality. The mighty God, even the LORD, has spoken, and we know the truth about death. We have more than words, for the Eternal Word Himself came to us amid the assaults of death, in this night of fears and tears, and bowed His head and gave up the ghost, and slept in the new tomb, and rose from it to smite the gates of brass and to break the bars of iron asunder. This is the Easter tidings. Death is dead for the faithful. The conquest has been achieved that can never be undone. Henceforth the life beyond death is the true life for us, and in a sense we live it now, for death comes to us as sleep, as the entrance into the blessed and everlasting rest. Easter is much more than an unguent to the sorrows of life. It is a way to victory over them. It is much more than an alleviation of human misery. It sheds upon our sorrows a transfiguring strength.

I

But it may be said, What you have written is true of the faithful dead. But all who have

fallen in battle have not been faithful. How are we to meet this difficulty? It must be faced frankly with all the light we have, and in full recognition of the fact that our light is limited.

We will not make too much of the soldier's nobility. It is true that the good soldier calls forth the love of every honest heart. Courage is the root of all virtue, and it will be an evil day when the coward is allowed to escape. Also self-sacrifice is the divinest element in man, 'he element that brings him nearest to the CHRIST who is the Bearer of our sorrows and the Fountain of our joy. We love to hear of those who have given themselves to the roughest and the sternest service, who have been ready to bear the very brunt of the fray. The dust and the smoke, and the garments rolled in blood, and the sword all hacked, and the dented armour, and the bruised shield, speak of a hero's work. These are good soldiers who, when they are called to advance to the attack, do not wish themselves away, who feel the stern joy which flushes the face in the light of battle, who do not know how to yield, and will not hear of retreating. Such men are the saviours of their country, and indeed no country can live without them. It is our business, when the land is imperilled, to value them as we ought and to help

them as we can. It is impiety to throw responsibilities upon God which He has thrown on us. We need in our defence no mere trumpeters of gala days, but men to be looked for among the slain and the surviving when the furious storm of battle is over. We have seen in this war great marvels of self-sacrifice which we cannot behold without bending our heads in reverence.

But it is true that among the bravest there are many who in quiet years did not live wisely, who had many weaknesses, and bore many stains, and were often grievously at fault. Their redemption cannot come from the fact that they died well, however well they died.

Are we, then, to give over hoping, to doubt their place in the great Redemption? No; for we may hope much, and very much, from the very peril and awfulness and solemnity of their end. Their lives were in hazard from the first day of their fighting. Did they not know it? Did they not breathe a prayer to the SAVIOUR? We take the first extract that lies to our hand from a chaplain's report. He says:—

'At 8.50 the evening closes with "family worship"—a short Scripture reading and prayer by the chaplain, after which comes two minutes set aside for silent prayer, when each man has

his opportunity for offering the confessions and petitions of his own heart. This evening worship is a very striking act. A stiff rule was made at the outset that no man was to wait to prayers unless he wished to wait. They all wait. The room is always crowded, and the reverent hush during those two silent minutes of prayer is witness to the value the men place on the act.'

'They all wait!'

Our blessed LORD has taught us, in the story of the thief who was saved in the very act of expiring, what salvation means. Whoever turns his face to CHRIST believingly, though it be but for an instant before his death, finds eternal life. This is the gospel in its naked majesty. There is nothing to be added. The life may have been utterly ungodly and wicked. It was so in the case of the dying robber. But when the crucified thief turned in his agony to the crucified CHRIST, all his sins were instantly washed away. We can imagine the Redeemer turning His head painfully, with love in His dying eyes, to the poor suppliant, and we know that He said in His own royal way, 'Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.' Whoever, even at the hour or the minute of his death, believes in the LORD JESUS CHRIST shall assuredly be saved.

But are we to say that this was a solitary, or at best an exceptional case? By no means. It may be that most are saved in this manner. We will quote Mr. SPURGEON. That great Doctor of Grace says :—

‘ If the thief was an exceptional case—and our Lord does not usually act in such a way—there would have been a hint given of so important a fact. A hedge would have been set about this exception to all rules. Would not the Saviour have whispered quietly to the dying man, “ You are the only one I am going to treat in this way.” . . . No, our Lord spoke openly, and those about Him heard what He said. Moreover, the inspired penman has recorded it. If it had been an exceptional case, it would not have been written in the Word of God.’

II

‘ When the wounded go home ’—how do they find it then? Among all the tender and wonderful words of CHRIST there are none more tender and more wonderful than those: ‘ I go to prepare a place for you.’ We cannot fully comprehend them. Underneath are the great abysses of the Eternal Love. How should CHRIST need to prepare a place for His people? Is it not enough that they should join Him where He is, and behold His glory? But if He is with them, is it not enough? With a word He made earth fit for

WHEN THE WOUNDED GO HOME 139

created man, but He does not with a word make heaven fit for the regenerated. He goes to heaven Himself as a loving host to see everything set in order against their coming. These dear lads, struck to the ground, came into a world where a place was prepared for them. Before they entered it many a loving thought had been given to making ready for them. The garments in which they were first arrayed were the handiwork of their mothers.

‘Little caps in secret sown,
And hid in many a quiet nook.’

They were received, most of them, with the gladdest and most loving welcome. So when they pass to the other side, to the new country, they are waited for. They are expected. All the things they need are ready. Their needs are anticipated and supplied, and the home of each differs from the home of every other. Nothing is too good for them. Everything must be the best. Our LORD is engaged in preparing and in interceding. He does not take any of His redeemed till the fruits are all mellow and the flowers are all full blown.

III

Then they enter into nobler service. In a beautiful little book, *The Gospel of Hope*, by Dr.

WALPOLE, Bishop of Edinburgh, we read of the young soldier fallen in battle. 'I picture him still going forward, only without the limitation and hindrance that the flesh imposes on us here.' He passes immediately into Paradise, and rests from labour, but not from work. Everything is looked at from within. 'Intuition takes the place of sight, faith that of knowledge.' 'Every one feels at home at once; there is no strangeness, no gradual getting used to things, no wondering whether you will like it, for all those old friends which, though we admired and praised on earth, we constantly found escaping us, are there in full strength.' We must copy the beautiful passage in which Dr. WALPOLE describes the comforting greeting of the Divine Love to the young soldier whose name has been inscribed on the roll of honour :—

'Away from thy home thou wentest, not knowing whither thou wentest, and so thou understandest My going forth to succour the world. In the trenches thou hadst no cover for thy head, no rest for thy limbs, and thou learnedst then the weariness of Him who had not where to lay His head. For days thou hadst short rations and hard fare, and in uncomplaining cheerfulness didst support the courage of thy followers; and so didst thou enter into the Fast of the SON OF MAN. Again and again I saw thee in the night watches, facing the mystery of death and agonising in the con-

flict that it brought thee, and there thou didst have thy share in My Gethsemane. And then in obedience to the call that thou knewest meant death thou didst willingly lay down thy life, and so hast learnt the secret of Calvary more surely than a thousand books could have taught thee. All this was My plan for thee, that in a few weeks thou shouldst sum up the whole of life, and entering into the fellowship of My sufferings mightest share the rest that leads to the glory of Resurrection.'

IV

For Resurrection is the goal. Paradise is a home of rest and of joyful work. But it is also a preparation for the Resurrection glory. The happy spirit in the consummation is united to the body. The Resurrection of CHRIST is the guarantee that those united to Him shall rise in the day of His appearing. For their bodies are redeemed as truly as their souls, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy, when this corruptible puts on incorruption, and this mortal puts on immortality. Death admits the faithful to a larger and more loving life. But that life is crowned on the Resurrection day of which Easter testifies. Thus has CHRIST our Redeemer opened wide His hands and poured forth more than gold.

XIII

'THEIR UN-OVERTAKEABLENESS'

'THEIR UN-OVERTAKEABleness'

Mark 13: 27, 28.

AN American poetess has said that our saddest thought of the dead is the thought of their un-overtakeableness. They have gone before, and we cannot overtake them. Who has not at one time or another been oppressed by that feeling? The dead are out of our reach, past our touching, and their new country is a land that is very far off.

But in the midst of this troubled world we greet once more the day of Easter, and rejoice in the resurrection of our Lord JESUS CHRIST.

On the first day of the Sabbath when His body lay all day in the rock-hewn sepulchre, wrapped in fine linen, with sweet spices. We remember how they rolled the great stone at the grave's mouth, knowing that He was dead. We remember how at the appointed time His dead body was quickened by the Father, how His heart began again to beat, how His soul went back to His body, how

He led captivity captive and triumphed over death.

So the new country is not undiscovered. One Traveller returned. He has gone back and will return again. The third day was the day of His first return; we know not when He will appear a second time, without sin unto salvation, but the hands of the clock are moving towards the hour. He promised ere He died that He would prepare a place for His people, and He returned to repeat the promise. He is keeping it. He has been keeping it since the day of His Ascension. He will complete it, and all who are His will be with Him there—with Him and with one another. The bodies of His people are laid in the grave, but their souls are not in durance, and for the bodies the day of deliverance draws on apace, the day when CHRIST will break the seal of the enclosing stone and set them free. So the dead are not un-overtakeable. We shall come to them one by one as our hour strikes.

II

There is more than this to say. The promise of the consummation sometimes chills us by its distance. 'I know that he shall rise again at the

resurrection at the last day,’ said the sorrowing sister. But the words seemed to bring no warmth or cheer to her heart. She repeated them drearily, as if thinking of something very, very distant. But the New Testament comes to us with its cordial, and assures us that we are come to the assembly and church of the first-born and to the spirits of just men made perfect. We are come to these, even in our dying bodies, even in the low lights of time. Dr. JOHN CAIRNS’s comment is perhaps the best: ‘We are come in indestructible unity and predestined association.’ The unity remains and cannot be broken. The association is real also, though in ways we hardly understand. Have the victorious dead forgotten us? Are they ignorant of us? We can trust them to look with compassion on our stumbling steps, for they know how hard it has been to live since they left us. Perhaps they join in the intercession of the Great High Priest. Perhaps we receive from them impulses which we cannot trace. It is not perhaps so ill with us as it might have been without their love. But into this mystery we cannot go very far. It is much to know that we have overtaken them in a manner, though we cannot touch them as we did because they are ascended. We take, by permission, from the *Holborn Review*, a beautiful

poem of the broken circle by the late Miss MARY
M. SHARPE :

UNDER ONE ROOF

‘Therefore at each moment can we joyfully exclaim :
in spite of time, death, and change, we are still all
together.’—SCHOPENHAUER.

Once, in days of long ago,
Days—of my whole life the best—
When the time for sleep had come,
And the house was hushed to rest,
It was such a happy thought,
Used to make my heart so light,
We were all beneath one roof
When I barred the door at night.

Let the wind moan as it would,
Let the raindrops patter fast,
They were near me, nestled warm
From the midnight, and the blast ;
Not one lingering out of reach,
Not one banished far aloof—
It’s a woman’s heaven to have
All she loves beneath one roof.

How to-night the autumn wind
Through the keyhole whistles shrill ;
It must roar amongst the firs
In that graveyard on the hill.
Dying leaves are whirled aloft,
Swaying branches knock the pane,
In the pauses of the wind
Listen ! Oh, the rain, the rain !

Now, when bed-time comes at length
To me, sitting here alone,
And the ticking of the clock
Tells how still the house has grown,
Oh, how heavy is the heart
That was once so light of yore ;
Now—I seem to bar them out
When at night I bar the door.

But our Father surely needs
All His dear ones near Him still ;
Are we not at home with Him,
In the house, or on the hill ?
So I fill my empty heart
With the thought that, far above,
Over them, as over me,
Spreads one roof of Heavenly Love.

So I can go up to bed,
Pass the doors where once I heard
Gentle breathing, as I crept
Softly by, without a word :
Though the house is silent now,
Though they wish me no good night—
We are still beneath one roof—
When I bar the door at night.

III

Also, when we die we overtake them at once,
and hold them for our very own. This hope is
rooted in CHRIST, Who died and rose again.
He gave the love on both sides, and that love is
immortal even when the outward tokens of it are

more or less withdrawn. There will come a day when it shall have the fullest freedom for expression and enjoyment, freed from all the mortal accidents that may have hindered, impaired, and enfeebled it. And this will come through CHRIST, Who breaks down the walls of partition, in the Day when absent faces and sundered hearts shall meet in Him Who gathers all into one.

XIV
SUSPENSE

SUSPENSE

Published February 18, 1915

THE whole nation is in a state of suspense, and suspense is very hard to bear. With some the keenness of the suffering is far greater than it is with others, and there may be creatures who escape altogether the anxiety of the time. Would that we could scarify such callosities! Suspense may be defined as a state of uncertainty accompanied with anxiety and expectation. It is very difficult to live through it. It is so difficult that when the suspense ends, as we hoped and prayed it might end, the peace of defeat is, for a short time at least, welcome as more tolerable than the racking agony of waiting. The issue may be life or death. It may be riches or ruin. It may be honour or shame. We wait for it and wring our hands while the heart is aching. We hope and we fear by turns. The chief misery of suspense is that, so far as appears, we seem unable to do anything—we are paralysed for the time.

There has been, and there is still, the suspense of our fate as a Nation and an Empire. We may

hope that this suspense is gradually passing and that the guarantees of victory are being secured. But some defeats are much more disastrous than others, and final defeat in this war would be to us not only disastrous but absolutely fatal. Life would cease to be worth living. Men would fight in desperation, and to the last drop of their blood, even if they knew that the effort was vain. We may hope that the triumph of the Allies is certain. But even now it is certain only if we put forth our full strength—the three-thirds of it for the one-third we have put forth already. No one has a right to calculate on paying a smaller price for a happy decision. The worst of the storm is not over, and in a sense the issue still remains indeterminate.

✓ There is, moreover, the suspense as to the fate of individual lives. That suspense has come to a sorrowful yet glorious end in many instances, but in many more it is still keen, still piercing. We would not add to the poignancy of the situation by harrowing details. The best words are the fewest. But the suspense holds in multitudes of loving hearts who have little respite day or night in waiting for the news to come.

✓ There is also suspense as to our individual fortunes. Life, it has been said, is a long holding out. Never was the word truer than it is to-day.

How many are cheerfully accepting the stinted way of living ! How much silent heroism there is in carrying on ' business as usual ' ! There would not be a murmur if the end was in sight. But even the faithful and the brave are sometimes sick with suspense when they read of five years' possible testing, and the like. What will remain for them if their incomes keep crumbling away ? They cannot hope for anything but utter shipwreck if this be so.

Can anything be done to make suspense more easy, less destructive to happiness ? Is there any way in which suspense can be made morally and spiritually fruitful ?

I

Suspense may be ended in many cases by simply obeying the call of duty and venturing life itself. Those who have volunteered and gone out to the battle, often after long perplexities and ponderings, seem to enjoy a singular rest of heart. This is the universal testimony of those who have met the men while they have been home on furlough or have seen them in the hospitals. They are exhilarated with the assurance that they have done their utmost. They have been in the trenches, they have been under fire, they have given all

they had to give. They have committed their case to God and they are tranquil. Nay, they sometimes laugh and play like children—so blessed is duty and so happy are those who take the high road.

On the other hand, those who ought to go, and in their hearts know it, are the most miserable of men. We are not speaking of cowards, or of those in whom the sense of honour is dead. We are speaking of the Shirkers. Let us be very careful and very charitable in assigning that name. But every one knows that even in this dread hour the Shirkers are to be found all over the country. They are often honourable men, but they shrink from the great sacrifice. There is so much to detain them. There are so many ties to break. There are so many plausible reasons for remaining, so many passable excuses, that they persuade themselves that their place is at home. But they have no peace day nor night. If they were to tell the truth they would say :

‘Sir, at my heart there was a kind of fighting
That would not let me sleep.’

But perhaps, quite possibly, no one says anything to them. They are the subject of incessant conversation behind their backs, but they are not

directly appealed to. They can read, however, the faces of their friends and neighbours, and they know what these are thinking. Sometimes they get a gleam of comfort and shelter under such pretexts as this: 'LORD KITCHENER is well satisfied with the supply of recruits.' But there is no rest for them. They are in suspense, ceaselessly urged by the new calls of each day, and their suspense can be ended rightly only in one manner. As we write, the evening paper comes in, and we read in it of the inquest on a man who was found drowned the other day. We make an extract from the evidence :—

The Coroner: 'Was he depressed over the war?'

The witness replied that deceased rather dreaded the idea of having to go. 'I think the war worried him,' he said.

The Coroner: 'Did he speak about joining the Army?'

Witness: 'Once or twice he said he would like to join, but he did not seem determined about it.'

When the light is dim and the seas run high, and the deadly sough is heard from every headland, the sailors say little. They address themselves to their task. What is uppermost is the duty of the individual man—the duty of the

passing hour. He must have a blind eye for danger. He must not be disposed to count the odds in a righteous cause. His business is, at whatever risk or cost, to play a manly part. He must bring to bear the strength of a resolute will on the conditions which he finds. It is not for him to lament that the equipment of the ship is not up to date. A good workman does not quarrel with his tools, but makes the best of them. Further, a good workman, a good sailor, a good soldier, does his duty as if the whole result of the struggle depended wholly upon himself.

A brave man will not hold back from making his sacrifice because so many have made their sacrifice. He will not allow them to shield him. He will join them and help them to shield the rest—those who cannot fight. Nobody knows what he may be worth. 'There was a little city and few men within it. And there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it. Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city.'

But most of us cannot under any circumstances go to war. The exempted include all women and many men. For each of them the question is, What am I doing? Can we say, all of us, that we

have done what we could? We verily believe that this is true of many women. Women have acquitted themselves nobly in this war, and have earned, in our judgment, the right to vote. We think it may also be said of the majority of men, that they have recognised and performed their duty. They have joyfully submitted to great sacrifices, and they are prepared to submit to greater sacrifices still. Above all, we honour the parents who proudly and sorrowfully have given their sons to the fight. But we are afraid there are not a few who have hung back. There are wretches who have done what they could to discourage and disable the men who were shielding them, but happily these are few. There are others, and they are more numerous, who have selfishly and apathetically refused their aid. We could still wish that it were found possible to penalise the defaulters, and we rejoice that public opinion is strengthening and setting against them. The brunt of the battle is on those soldiers and sailors who are really engaged in the conflict, but shall we disparage the statesmen, the financiers, the preachers, the business men who are freely and gladly giving their time, their thought, their energy, and their whole hearts in the service of the country they love so well?

We must say a word, though it is only a word, on the function of prayer. At a time like this prayer brings relief and power. Even in the most agonising suspense a strange peace is bestowed by CHRIST in answer to supplication, and He redeems the word He spoke when He said: 'Not as the world giveth give I unto you.' We shall never know all the forces that are working in this strife, but the most powerful of all forces may very well be the force of wrestling, believing prayer.

II

We must touch briefly on the wrong ways of mitigating the agony of suspense. There are poor, fretful, futile ways. A traveller who has only given himself the shortest space of time to catch a train finds that his carriage is blocked. What use is it if he gives silly advice to the driver, if he is fidgety and impatient, if he lashes himself into a fever by giving orders that cannot possibly be fulfilled. It is a poor business to keep on buying successive editions of papers with no news in them. Suspense must be combated in a more dignified way. It is right—it is very right—that the sufferer should seek genial society, and it is not hard to find it in these days, when we are all

wrapped more or less in the same thunder-cloud. Books will often furnish a most helpful relief. But we cannot contemplate with any pleasure the continuance of such things as football and horse-racing in a time of war. They hopelessly violate the sense of fitness. They show an entire contempt of the seriousness of the situation. These sports are often practised by men who, if they had a spark of manhood in them, would be out at the Front. Above all things we must learn, in GEORGE ELIOT's phrase, 'to do without opium.' There are forbidden remedies which bring no healing, and which degrade the souls and the bodies of those who have recourse to them. Anodynes and stimulants may have their place to fill, but they are full of danger in such a time as this.

III

For God means us to bear the suspense, to confront it, and to use it. It is good for us to look the possible impending calamity in the face. The darker alternative is to be encountered. 'She may not survive this operation.' Then it is well that we should prepare to meet the trouble in the spirit of submission and faith. We must not try to cheat the supreme moment of its true

intensity. We shall bear the blow better, if it must come, because we have anticipated it in thought. And if the blow does not fall, if the calamity is averted, what lights, new lights, should fall on the preciousness of what is given back to us! We may learn for the first time how miserably we have failed in thankfulness for our dearest possessions. There was, it may be, no want of love, but there was little expression of love. What is restored to us should be cherished and treasured as it never was before. How we went back in the searching ordeal on the security that was once ours, in a time which seems infinitely remote! How little we praised God for our prosperity and peace! Blessed are those whose dear ones will return. With what wealth of love they will be received! But blessed also are those whose beloved die on the field of battle, if they are taught thereby to realise the illimitable resources of the Divine Love and its quick response to human faith and need.

XV

ENDURANCE

ENDURANCE

Published June 24, 1915

IN his recent impressive speech the PRIME MINISTER laid proper stress on the twin thoughts that must be in our minds while the war lasts. We must, in the first place, have a due sense of the gravity and peril of our situation. We must, in the second place, cherish an abiding confidence in the issue. There are those who consider it their duty to prevent panic, which is quite right, and believe that the best way to prevent it is to deny danger, which is quite wrong. When the air is electric people feel danger, and the weather prophets may prophesy smooth things without inducing anybody to put to sea.

Mr. ASQUITH also said truly and beautifully that this war was to be a war of endurance, and that we must see to it that we endured to the end. It is written, 'He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved,' and this is a text by which we must fortify ourselves against the storms to come.

I

What is endurance in the Christian sense? There are two constituents of the Christian endurance, or of the Christian patience. One is active and one is passive. But we believe that the element of activity is never absent from the true patience. We are summoned to run with patience the race that is set before us. The image of the patient runner is not commonly realised except by thoughtful readers. Running seems to be an exercise incompatible with patience, and patience is too often regarded as mere passivity under suffering and wrong. In reality it is as active a virtue as any.

It is worth while to consider the Biblical conception. In order to run our race patiently and triumphantly we must begin by stripping ourselves. All that hinders our running must be put aside. We must be done with the sin that easily besets us, and we must be done even with the weights which we are wont to carry in the ordinary course of existence. They are too heavy for such a business as that to which we are set. We must cease to concern ourselves with the anxieties and amusements, resentments, ambitions, desires, which in quieter times so largely filled our

thoughts. We must struggle against and master every kind of evil. All must be laid aside to the last ounce. Every grain of selfishness, every rag of sin, must be done with. Thoughts of pleasure, profit, preferment, and distinction must be dismissed. The race is too hard for us otherwise. We are limping mortals, and soon exhaust our strength if we fail rightly to husband it and to use it. 'He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved,' but no other. By the time the race is closed one has tripped, another faints, a third is out of breath, and others are far behind. It must not be so with us in the tremendous struggle to which we are committed now.

NAPOLÉON said, 'Conquest made me what I am, and conquest must maintain me.' Conquest has made us what we are, and we are too apt to forget that conquest must maintain us. The passion for ease and comfort and the continuance of things as they are has grown so strong among the prosperous of our nation that it is destructively angry when anything interferes with it. It is like the Eastern who thought to ignore death. 'None might enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth.' It is afraid to face the truth, and is impatient of those who would break its security. Such faith as lingers in this temper of mind is rudely shaken

when the stern facts of the world come to light. It would arraign providence, or at least doubt providence, under the experience of such things. It would punish the heavens for hailing if it could. But we are happily in the process of liberation from these lower frames of mind.

We must not only run, and run with patience, but we must set our eyes on the goal. For the moment let us say that our goal is victory, the winning of this war. Every other consideration must yield to this. The old moralist said, 'Straight forward is the best running,' and he spoke well. We shall go under if we turn aside to political controversies, or, what is much baser, personal recriminations. Difference of opinion there must be, but let us differ from one another as those drawn together under the shadow and the pressure of the wild weather. Political convictions which we have held and advocated and fought for during a whole lifetime are hard indeed to set aside even momentarily, but the thing must be done. Runners cannot afford to sit down and pause. We must have one object, one thought, one goal, one passion. For the sake of that we must be prepared to sacrifice everything—our dear ones, our possessions, our very life. We must be daunted by no difficulties. We must refuse to

give way even to what appears inevitable. We must, as far as we can, act in the belief that everything that stands in the way of victory can be prevented or remedied, and ought to be prevented or remedied.

If we go to work in this spirit we must succeed. A divided heart is an unhappy heart. A heart that is whole and single and utterly disinterested is happy, whatever may befall. None of us knows the reserves, the inward resources, of men and women when they are reinforced by grace and called out by duty. Devoting ourselves to the supreme end, we shall find that we did not know what our full strength was. Nay, we shall find a buoyant inner strength welling up from deep fountains of being. The spirit of the runner will rise as the race goes on, and make all yokes easy and all burdens light.

II

We must endure 'as seeing Him Who is invisible.' Or, as the New Testament has it, 'we must run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto JESUS, the author and finisher of our faith.'

We do verily believe that in spite of all appearances this nation has hitherto been strengthened

for its great task by faith in the love and in the righteousness of GOD. Our consciences acquit us of all desire for war, and of all intention to annex the possessions of other nations. We have stood for liberty and for justice, and for right as opposed to might. We have done all this, and we have done it at a great price. We humbly believe that if we do our part we shall not be without reinforcements from the higher Will that rules, that Will of GOD which is most clearly manifested in the life and death and resurrection of the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

That faith is nearer the hearts of our people than many have been wont to imagine. It has nerved our soldiers on the field, it has comforted the lonely and anxious watchers at home. It has not, we hope, induced any one to believe that without doing our utmost we can attain the prize. But secretly and silently it has done, and will do, its work in sustaining the nation and in preparing it for the duties and the burdens and the sufferings that lie concealed.

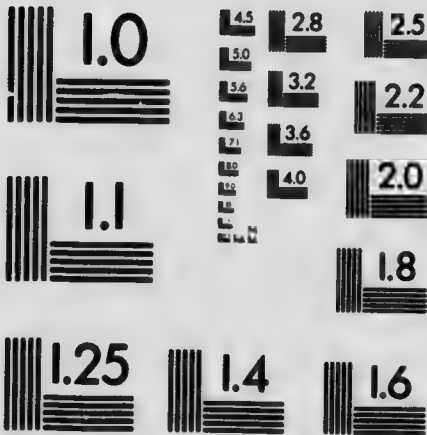
For Christian endurance is not fatalism. Fatalism, as we take it, does not mean patience, nor resignation, nor submission, but acquiescence produced by a belief that a blind power—necessity—rules everything. It involves a denial both of

science and religion. It finds an almost perfect example in the story of a Turkish regiment surrounded by Greeks in an amphitheatre of hills, who sat down and died patiently of starvation. No, we say, faith in God is a faith in righteous love. It is a faith in communion, it is a faith in prayer, in the answer to prayer. It is such a faith as will enable those who hold it to go on to the last, to struggle with adversity, even when little hope remains. It is a faith that teaches endurance as an art to be acquired like any other by practice—in this case by the practice of the presence of God. It teaches men and women to rise above bodily pain, to control the useless fret and chafing against it. It makes us all like soldiers in the battlefield, who resolutely acquire the art of bearing pain as well as it can be borne, who find a special and incommunicable joy in the victory of the spirit over the flesh. We hate and fear that form of false endurance which is a sullen submissiveness to unknown powers, of cowering resignation under the pitiless but inevitable forces of the universe. Minds imbued with this conviction are paralysed. They come to believe that war and pestilence and murder and every form of evil will continue while the race lasts, that things are without remedy, and that to dream of



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



APPLIED IMAGE Inc

1653 East Main Street
Rochester, New York 14609 USA
(716) 482 - 0300 - Phone
(716) 288 - 5989 - Fax

improving human affairs is to dream of forcing water uphill.

Christian endurance is quite another thing. We have defined it, but not completely. There is in Christian endurance a real element of resignation. We have very often to put out our whole strength and to exhaust ourselves in passionate pleading, and, to all appearance, in vain. We have to suppress our will before a higher Power. We have to submit to the inevitable without whining. Nay, we have to rejoice in adversity and defeat, and to maintain our faith in the presence of both. But the Christian resignation, no matter how complete and triumphant, has always in it an element of activity. It is never a dead acquiescence. It is a way of coming near to God, and discovering in that approach that He means for us some better thing than that which was denied. This is the great wonder and secret of the higher life, given only to those who come with bleeding feet and with hearts that have been laden with sorrow. They know that Right must win at the last, even if for a time it may be overborne. What is really of God may lie for a season under the shadow of the Cross, but only for a season, and he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.

III

All we are passing through teaches us that elevation, and not happiness, is the object of the grand plan. It teaches us also to hope mightily for the day to be, to hope for this world and for the next. Before the war the music of the word 'eternity' had ceased to mean much to this generation. To many it now means everything. The new world balances the old and far outweighs it. As life nears its ending we think of the friends of long ago. Some of them are still in this land of the dying—buffeted, scattered, world-worn, and waysore. Some have won to the hill where MOSES stood, and have seen a goodlier prospect than this earth can show. But so many have gone and so many are going in the springtide of their promise. Those on whom we have lavished our care, to whom we looked to take our places, do better than we have done the work of GOD in this world, are entering in before us. And what are we to say? Why, this—that all the teeming thoughts of life and hope which were embodied in our homes have not come to an end because the dear ones have died. There is the infinite extension of thought and love and hope in the world that is not perishable. The unseen land to which we

hasten gives meaning to the fair but transient world of time. So we press forward to Eternity, our refuge. We press forward to meet the great realities, to grapple with them, to wrestle with them, to hold them till we know their name. Death is the entrance to Eternity, the giver of life, the angel of fulfilled humanity.

XVI

THE ACCEPTANCE OF SACRIFICE

THE ACCEPTANCE OF SACRIFICE

Published April 13, 1916

MUCH is thought and said in these days about the offering of sacrifice. An equally vital subject, which we propose to discuss, is the acceptance of sacrifice.

I

All Christians agree that we must accept the sacrifice of CHRIST for our sins. We can do no other. By His doing and dying He achieved for men what they could not achieve for themselves. In Him we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins. We rest upon Him Whom GOD has set forth to be the propitiation. So resting we are free from condemnation. We are free because He was condemned in our stead, because He carried all our load to the Cross. So dying He was our substitute, securing for us deliverance from sin in its guilt, in its power, and in its penalty. To understand this is to attain to that reaching and touching of CHRIST which means salvation.

But this is not all. When we accept as our own

the sacrifice and oblation for the sin of the world, we accept it in the sacrificial temper. We identify ourselves with the Divine suffering. Each heart says Amen to GOD in CHRIST. Our deliverance does not liberate us from sacrifice ; rather it binds us to sacrifice. ST. PAUL, the great teacher of the Cross, after celebrating the solitary achievement of the Head of the body, the Church, Who is the beginning and the first-born from the dead, says that he now rejoices in his sufferings for his fellow-believers, and fills up that which is behind of the sufferings of CHRIST in his flesh, for His body's sake, which is the Church. ST. PAUL cast his thoughts to the future. He knew that much would happen to break the quiet that comes from trust in CHRIST. He knew that there was before him a life of conflict and suffering. He had to bear his full part in these. He had to renew again and again his struggle with the Black Watch of evil. Every inch of the road that stretched between him and the cross whereon he was to die swarmed with foemen. He had in his soul a deep and unbroken rest, but the rest was not on the surface but in the depths. So he girded himself, as did the Heir of all things, to service and to sacrifice. He seemed to think of the sacrifice that was to come as a drop in the measure which had

to be filled up till it ran over. When he speaks of that which is behind of the afflictions of CHRIST, he does not refer merely to sufferings borne for CHRIST. He means sufferings borne for CHRIST and with CHRIST. The Church is CHRIST's Body, and so the sorrows of the members are the sorrows of the Head. They are shared with CHRIST and accepted with CHRIST, and they are not to last for ever, for the day will come when they will be overpast. So the holy Apostle looked forward. He remembered the Voice that called to him at the beginning of his Christian dedication, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?' and he understood how the Master identifies Himself with His people and is still afflicted in their afflictions. ST. PAUL knew what the worst would be, and he had gauged and braved his fears. Great storms were out; but they could do no more than destroy the frail tent of the poor body and set the spirit free for the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

II

We pass on to consider the acceptance of sacrifice from our fellow-creatures. The subject is not altogether free from difficulty. We are all agreed that unselfishness is the practical test of character. We may call it what we please—brotherly kindness,

charity, humanity, benevolence, beneficence, or generosity. But the sacrifice of self is a cardinal doctrine and precept of the New Testament. We do not, however, accept the watchword of the positivist philosophy, which used to be 'Live for others.' This motto was intended to supersede the standard of Christian duty. It was intended to embody the aspirations of all generous natures and to span the chasm of warring creeds. But while we cannot too earnestly, too simply, too humbly, too unreservedly accept the sacrifice of CHRIST in our room, we must be very slow in accepting the sacrifices of others.

It is true that the best life is the service of our fellows. The most selfish are the readiest to condemn selfishness. All the same, we must be careful to distinguish. Some time ago we discussed the effect on those who consciously devote themselves to live for others—the effects that result from that devotion. We now wish to call attention more particularly to the effects produced on those who are always accepting and always looking for the sacrifice of others on their behalf.

We need not say much about unselfishness in the small details of life. If people are to be happy they must learn the art of living together. In order to do this without friction there must be give

THE ACCEPTANCE OF SACRIFICE 181

and take. Only we should hesitate to apply such a word as sacrifice to these small everyday surrenders which are so easy to those who love. But we soon come to graver problems. Parents very often make sacrifices for their children which may be beyond the line of obligation. We have all known fathers and mothers who impoverish and stint their lives for the education of their children in fashionable schools and colleges, and go on year after year in supplying to their sons and daughters what they themselves never enjoyed. There comes a point where the sacrifice should be refused. It should always be accepted with a full sense of what it involves, with a careful watching of the stooping which comes to those who bear more than they can well carry. It should be accepted with profound gratitude and with the determination that, in so far as it is possible, it shall be fully requited. Even when this is done, we repeat that there comes a day when manifestly it ought no longer to be accepted.

On the other hand, it is quite possible that children may sacrifice too much to their parents. A mother is left alone in the world save for a loving daughter, and as years pass comes to lean more and more on that daughter's service and affection. A day comes when the daughter is

claimed by a stranger, and all her heart goes out to meet the claim. She refuses, nevertheless. She considers that her first duty is to her mother, and she resigns herself to a lonely life, which is none the lighter because she remembers that it was by her own choice that it continued to be lonely.

We say that those sacrifices of children ought not to be accepted. One might imagine that the acceptance of such sacrifices was wholly impossible to really noble and unselfish natures. It may be so, but any one who thinks and observes sees how many are wearily and dutifully carrying out a life subject to constant demands from others. There are persons who live as vampires live, by absorbing the young life that is near to them.

Also, it used to be widely held that women in particular should live for others. Perhaps this belongs to the past. We hope so. One of the great preachers of altruism was JAMES HINTON, a really good man in spite of his aberrations of thought. He imagined that his work as a writer was of supreme importance to the world, and brought his poor wife into great straits. We are told that when the family exchequer was almost empty he took to descanting on the seemliness of death by hunger, and the clear advantage he would

derive from being driven to desperation. All that **JAMES HINTON** ever wrote was not worth the sacrifice of a woman's life for a single year. We need not multiply instances. What we have to do is to think over our own lives, and to see that those near us are sacrificing as little as may be to our tastes and fancies.

III

All this bears very directly on the urgent questions of the day.

Many of us—most of us—must at the present time accept the tremendous sacrifice of our soldiers, our sailors, our aviators. We do not need to give the harrowing picture of the lives they are living with such gallantry and cheerfulness on the very edge of death—in jeopardy every hour and every minute. We have to accept the sacrifices, but we are constrained by every consideration of honour and gratitude to accept them in a sacrificial temper. We must, so far as in us lies, carry out their supreme sacrifice in the infinitely quieter and more easily endured sacrifices of our daily life. Are we aware of what we are doing in the acceptance of their sacrifices?

In the *Hibbert Journal* for April the editor, **DR. L. P. JACKS**, has a most impressive article on

the present situation. He carries us with him from the beginning to the end of his paper. Dr. JACKS admits that we ought to have known that the rulers of Germany were preparing to attack us. We are much to blame that we had to wait for the outbreak of the war before discovering the predatory intentions of Germany. We were amply warned. But he contends that we could not have been prepared for such a war as this has turned out to be. We could not have believed that Germany meant to overthrow the moral foundation on which Western civilisation has been built up. Nor could we have known that Germany 'was ready to base her conduct in war on a code of ethics which has never yet been acknowledged by man nor practised anywhere unless it be in the nethermost pit.' We were perplexed a little, even after the war began, but gradually the truth dawned upon us. The orgy of bestiality in Belgium, the sinking of the *Lusitania*, the bombarding of defenceless towns, the murder of Armenians, the killing of Nurse CAVELL, and other things clear as the sun in heaven, set a final seal on our conviction that the work we have to resist and overthrow is from first to last the devil's work. Since Dr. JACKS wrote we have read the horrible story of the fearful suffering at Wittenberg Camp.

When typhus broke out the German doctors fled. Before that they had employed savage dogs to terrorise the prisoners. Flogging with a rubber whip was frequent. Men were tied to posts with their arms above their heads for hours. The men actually looked upon the typhus, with all its horrors, as a godsend. The prisoners, starved and naked, had no help except from the heroic English doctors, two of whom died of typhus about a month after their arrival. The German medical officer in charge of the camp visited only on one occasion, attired in a complete suit of protective clothing, including mask and rubber gloves. A certain number of coffins were sent in by the Germans every day, in which the bodies of the dead were put. What the prisoners found hardest to bear was the jeers with which the coffins were frequently greeted by the inhabitants of Wittenberg, who stood outside the wire and were permitted to insult the dead.

We say with Dr. JACKS, that what calls us to battle is naked Evil. It is no longer Germany, but a fiendish power behind her that we are fighting against, and we know what we are fighting for. With naked Evil we must fight, and we can fight only one way, for reason and persuasion are out of the question here. So our hesitations vanish.

What more proof do we want that the hour when the soul must put on its armour is arrived? From now forwards till this power is broken nothing else really matters. We cannot all be soldiers or sailors, but we can give what we possess to the last penny, and ungrudgingly, 'the last ounce of mental and moral energy; the loss of our noblest and best; our own lives as a matter of course. For we are fighting against an enemy whose triumph would be the defeat of our souls, and the vow has been vowed that he shall not prevail.' Out of this conflict and this coming victory will rise a new and nobler race. Dr. JACKS says rightly: 'I can imagine nothing worse for my native land than another century of such a life as we were living before the war. Before the end of it we should have gone to pieces, and it would have needed no attack from without to lay our Empire in ruins. A shock was necessary to bring us to our senses and to send our quacks to the right-about.' But now we have a vision of a better day. Our gallant fighters make their ceaseless appeal. For us their bodies are broken, for us their blood is shed. Are we worthy of the sacrifice?

We have a word to say about the persons called conscientious objectors. Those who can fight and stand aside from fighting will be judged in the

THE ACCEPTANCE OF SACRIFICE 187

time to come. For the rest, the State has certain powers. It may not choose to exercise all its powers on those who are accepting the sacrifices made for them and treating them as they do. In common justice the State should see that at least the pecuniary sacrifice made by those men shall be as great as the pecuniary sacrifice made by the fighters. It ought also to make sure that they are doing the necessary work of the country. The nation will do what remains to be done.